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Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER and MELVIN J. LASKY

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W. H. Auden

The Alienated City

Reflections on "Othello"

ANY CONSIDERATION of *The Tragedy of Othello* must be primarily occupied not with its official hero but with its villain. I cannot think of any other play in which only one character performs personal actions—all the *deeds* are Iago's—and all the others without exception only exhibit behaviour. In marrying each other, Othello and Desdemona have performed a deed, but this took place before the play begins. Nor can I think of another play in which the villain is so completely triumphant: everything Iago sets out to do he accomplishes (among his goals, I include his self-destruction). Even Cassio, who survives, is maimed for life.

If *Othello* is a tragedy—and one certainly cannot call it a comedy—it is tragic in a peculiar way. In most tragedies the fall of the hero from glory to misery and death is the work, either of the gods, or of his own freely chosen acts, or, more commonly, a mixture of both. But the fall of Othello is the work of another human being; nothing he says or does originates with himself. In consequence we feel pity for him but no respect; our æsthetic respect is reserved for Iago.

Iago is a wicked man. The wicked man, the stage villain, as a subject of serious dramatic interest does not, so far as I know, appear in the drama of Western Europe before the Elizabethans. In the mystery plays, the wicked characters, like Satan or Herod, are treated comically, but the theme of the triumphant

villain cannot be treated comically because the suffering he inflicts is real.

A DISTINCTION MUST BE MADE between the villain-figures like Don John in *Much Ado*, Richard III, Edmund in *Lear*, Iachimo in *Cymbeline*—and the merely criminal character—figures like Duke Antonio in *The Tempest*, Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, Macbeth, or Claudius in *Hamlet*. The criminal is a person who finds himself in a situation where he is tempted to break the law and succumbs to the temptation: he ought, of course, to have resisted the temptation, but everybody, both on stage and in the audience, must admit that, had they been placed in the same situation, they, too, would have been tempted. The opportunities are exceptional—Prospero, immersed in his books, has left the government of Milan to his brother, Angelo is in a position of absolute authority, Claudius is the Queen's lover, Macbeth is egged on by prophecies and heaven-sent opportunities—but the desire for a dukedom or a crown or a chaste and beautiful girl are desires which all can imagine themselves feeling.

The villain, on the other hand, is shown from the beginning as being a malcontent, a person with a general grudge against life and society. In most cases, this grudge is comprehensible because the villain has, in fact, been wronged by Nature or Society: Richard III is a hunchback, Don John and Edmund are bastards. What distinguishes their actions from those of the criminal is that, even when they have something tangible to gain, this is a secondary satisfaction; their primary satisfaction is the infliction of suffering on others or the exercise of power over others against their will. Richard

W. H. AUDEN's earlier Shakespearean studies —"The Fallen City: Some Reflections on Henry IV" and "Music in Shakespeare"—were published in ENCOUNTER, November 1959 and December 1957.

does not really desire Anne; what he enjoys is successfully wooing a lady whose husband and father-in-law he has killed. Since he has persuaded his father that Edgar is a would-be parricide, Edmund has no need to betray Gloucester to Cornwall and Regan in order to inherit. Don John has nothing personally to gain from ruining the happiness of Claudio and Hero except the pleasure of seeing them unhappy. Iachimo is a doubtful case of villainy. When he and Posthumous make their wager, the latter warns him:

If she remain unseduced, you not making it appear otherwise, for your ill opinion and th'assault you have made on her chastity you shall answer me with your sword.

To the degree that Iachimo's motive in deceiving Posthumous is simply a fear of losing his life, he is a coward, not a villain; he is only a villain to the degree that his motive is the pleasure of making and seeing the innocent suffer. Coleridge's description of Iago's actions as "motiveless malignancy" applies in some degree to all Shakespeare's villains. The adjective *motiveless* means, firstly, that the tangible gains, if any, are not the principal motive and, secondly, that the motive is not the desire for personal revenge upon another for a personal injury.

IAGO HIMSELF PROFFERS TWO reasons for wishing to injure Othello and Cassio. He tells Roderigo that, in appointing Cassio to be his lieutenant, Othello has treated him unjustly, in which conversation he talks like the conventional Elizabethan malcontent. In his soliloquies, he refers to his suspicion that both Othello and Cassio have made him a cuckold, and here he talks like the conventional jealous husband. But there are, I believe, insuperable objections to taking these reasons, as some critics have done, at their face value. If one of Iago's goals was to supplant Cassio in the lieutenantancy, one can only say that this plot fails for, when Cassio is cashiered, Othello does not appoint Iago in his place. It is true that, in Act III, scene 3, when they swear blood-brotherhood in revenge, Othello concludes with the words

...now thou art my lieutenant

to which Iago replies:

I am your own for ever

but the use of the word *lieutenant* in this context refers, surely, not to a public military rank,

but to a private and illegal delegation of authority—the job delegated to Iago is the secret murder of Cassio, and Iago's reply, which is a mocking echo of an earlier line of Othello's, refers to a relation which can never become public. The ambiguity of the word is confirmed by its use in the first line of the scene which immediately follows. Desdemona says

Do you know, sirrah, where the Lieutenant Cassio lies?

(One should beware of attaching too much significance to Elizabethan typography, but it is worth noting that Othello's lieutenant is in lower case and Desdemona's in upper.)

As for Iago's jealousy, one cannot believe that a seriously jealous man could behave towards his wife as Iago behaves towards Emilia, for the wife of a jealous husband is the first person to suffer. Not only is the relation of Iago and Emilia, as we see it on stage, without emotional tension, but also Emilia openly refers to a rumour of her infidelity as something already disposed of.

*Some such squire it was
That turned your wit, the seamy side without
And made you to suspect me with the Moor...*

At one point Iago states that, in order to revenge himself on Othello, he will not rest till he is even with him, wife for wife. But, in the play, no attempt at Desdemona's seduction is made. Iago does not make an assault on her virtue himself, he does not encourage Cassio to make one, and he even prevents Roderigo from getting anywhere near her.

FINALLY, one who seriously desires personal revenge desires to reveal himself. The revenger's greatest satisfaction is to be able to tell his victim to his face—"You thought you were all-powerful and untouchable and could injure me with impunity. Now you see that you were wrong. Perhaps you have forgotten what you did; let me have the pleasure of reminding you."

When at the end of the play, Othello asks him in bewilderment why he has thus ensnared his soul and body, if his real motive were revenge for having been cuckolded or unjustly denied promotion, Iago could have said so, instead of refusing to explain.

In Act II, scene 1, occur seven lines which,

taken in isolation, seem to make Iago a seriously jealous man.

*Now I do love her too,
Not out of absolute lust (though peradventure
I stand accountant for as great a sin)
But partly led to diet my revenge
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leaped into my seat, the thought whereof
Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my vitals.*

But if spoken by an actor with serious passion, these lines are completely at variance with the rest of the play, including Iago's other lines on the same subject.

*And it is thought abroad, that twixt my sheets
He's done my office: I know not if't be true
Yet I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do, as if for surety.*

It is not inconceivable, given the speed at which Shakespeare wrote, that, at some point in the composition of *Othello*, Shakespeare considered making Iago seriously jealous and, like his prototype in Cinthio, a would-be seducer of Desdemona, and that, when he arrived at his final conception of Iago, he overlooked the incompatibility of the *poisonous mineral* and the *wife-for-wife* passages with the rest.

IN TRYING to understand Iago's character, one should begin, I believe, by asking why Shakespeare should have gone to the trouble of inventing Roderigo, a character who has no prototype in Cinthio. From a stage director's point of view, Roderigo is a headache. In the first act we learn that Brabantio had forbidden him the house, from which we must conclude that Desdemona had met him and disliked him as much as her father. In the second act, in order that the audience shall know that he has come to Cyprus, Roderigo has to arrive on the same ship as Desdemona, yet she shows no embarrassment in his presence. Indeed, she and everybody else, except Iago, seem unaware of his existence, for Iago is the only person who ever speaks a word to him. Presumably, he has some official position in the army, but we are never told what it is. His entrances and exits are those of a puppet: whenever Iago has company, he obligingly disappears, and whenever Iago is alone and wishes to speak to him, he comes in again immediately.

Moreover, so far as Iago's plot is concerned, there is nothing Roderigo does which Iago could not do better without him. He could easily have found another means, like an anonymous letter, of informing Brabantio of Desdemona's elope-

ment, and, for picking a quarrel with a drunken Cassio, he has, on his own admission, other means handy.

*Three lads of Cyprus, noble swelling spirits,
That hold their honour in a wary distance,
The very elements of this warlike isle
Have I to-night flustered with flowing cups.*

Since Othello has expressly ordered him to kill Cassio, Iago could have murdered him without fear of legal investigation. Instead, he not only chooses as an accomplice a man whom he is cheating and whose suspicions he has constantly to allay, but also a man who is plainly inefficient as a murderer and a man who holds incriminating evidence against him.

A man who is seriously bent on revenge does not take unnecessary risks nor confide in anyone whom he cannot trust or do without. Emilia is not, as in Cinthio, Iago's willing accomplice, so that, in asking her to steal the handkerchief, Iago is running a risk, but it is a risk he has to take. By involving Roderigo in his plot, he makes discovery and his own ruin almost certain.

IT IS A LAW OF DRAMA that, by the final curtain, all secrets, guilty or innocent, shall have been revealed so that all, on both sides of the footlights, know who did or did not do what, but usually the guilty are exposed either because, like Edmund, they repent and confess or because of events which they could not reasonably have foreseen. Don John could not have foreseen that Dogberry and Verges would overhear Borachio's conversation, nor Iachimo that Pisanio would disobey Posthumous' order to kill Imogen, nor King Claudius the intervention of a ghost.

Had he wished, Shakespeare could easily have contrived a similar kind of exposure for Iago. Instead, by giving Roderigo the role he does, he makes Iago as a plotter someone devoid of ordinary worldly common sense.

One of Shakespeare's intentions was, I believe, to indicate that Iago desires self-destruction as much as he desires the destruction of others but, before elaborating on this, let us consider Iago's treatment of Roderigo, against whom he has no grievance—it is he who is injuring Roderigo—as a clue to his treatment of Othello and Cassio.

WHEN WE FIRST SEE Iago and Roderigo together, the situation is like that in a Ben Jonson comedy—a clever rascal is gulling a rich fool

who deserves to be gulled because his desire is no more moral than that of the more intelligent avowed rogue who cheats him out of his money. Were the play a comedy, Roderigo would finally realise that he had been cheated but would not dare appeal to the law because, if the whole truth were made public, he would cut a ridiculous or shameful figure. But, as the play proceeds, it becomes clear that Iago is not simply after Roderigo's money, a rational move, but that his main game is Roderigo's moral corruption which is irrational because Roderigo has given him no cause to desire his moral ruin. When the play opens, Roderigo is shown as a spoiled weakling, but no worse. It may be foolish of him to hope to win Desdemona's affection by gifts and to employ a go-between, but his conduct is not in itself immoral. Nor is he, like Cloten in *Cymbeline*, a brute who regards women as mere objects of lust. He is genuinely shocked as well as disappointed when he learns of Desdemona's marriage, but continues to admire her as a woman full of most blessed condition. Left to himself, he would have had a good bawl, and given her up. But Iago will not let him alone. By insisting that Desdemona is seducible and that his real rival is not Othello but Cassio, he brings Roderigo to entertain the idea, originally foreign to him, of becoming a seducer and of helping Iago to ruin Cassio. Iago has had the pleasure of making a timid, conventional man become aggressive and criminal. Cassio beats up Roderigo. Again, at this point, had he been left to himself, he would have gone no further, but Iago will not let him alone until he consents to murder Cassio, a deed which is contrary to his nature, for he is not only timid but also incapable of passionate hatred.

*I have no great devotion to the deed;
And yet he has given me satisfying reasons.
'Tis but a man gone.*

Why should Iago want to do this to Roderigo? To me, the clue to this and to all Iago's conduct, is to be found in Emilia's comment when she picks up the handkerchief.

*My wayward husband hath a hundred times
Wooed me to steal it...*

Heaven knows, not I,
I nothing know, but for his fantasy.

As his wife, Emilia must know Iago better than anybody else does. She does not know, any more than the others, that he is malevolent,

but she does know that her husband is addicted to practical jokes. What Shakespeare gives us in Iago is a portrait of a Practical Joker of a peculiarly appalling kind, and perhaps the best way of approaching the play is by a general consideration of the Practical Joker.

II

SOCIAL RELATIONS, as distinct from the brotherhood of a community, are only possible if there is a common social agreement as to which actions or words are to be regarded as serious means to a rational end and which are to be regarded as play, as ends in themselves. In our culture, for example, a policeman must be able to distinguish between a murderous street fight and a boxing match, or a listener between a radio play in which war is declared and a radio news-broadcast announcing a declaration of war.

Social life also presupposes that we may believe what we are told unless we have reason to suppose either that our informant has a serious motive for deceiving us, or that he is mad and incapable himself of distinguishing between truth and falsehood. If a stranger tries to sell me shares in a gold mine, I should be a fool if I did not check up on his statements before parting with my money, and if another tells me that he has talked with men who came out of a flying saucer, I shall assume that he is crazy. But if I ask a stranger the way to the station, I shall assume that his answer is truthful to the best of his knowledge, because I cannot imagine what motive he could have for misdirecting me.

PRACTICAL JOKES are a demonstration that the distinction between seriousness and play is not a law of nature but a social convention which can be broken, and that a man does not always require a serious motive for deceiving another.

Two men, dressed as city employees, block off a busy street and start digging it up. The traffic cop, motorists, pedestrians assume that this familiar scene has a practical explanation—a water main or an electric cable is being repaired—and make no attempt to use the street. In fact, however, the two diggers are private citizens in disguise who have no business there.

All practical jokes are anti-social acts, but this does not necessarily mean that all practical jokes are immoral. A moral practical joke exposes some flaw in society which is a hindrance to a real community or brotherhood. That it should

be possible for two private individuals to dig up a street without being stopped is a just criticism of the impersonal life of a large city where most people are strangers to each other, not brothers; in a village where all the inhabitants know each other personally, the deception would be impossible.

A real community, as distinct from social life, is only possible between persons whose idea of themselves and others is real, not fantastic. There is, therefore, another class of practical jokes which are aimed at particular individuals with the reformatory intent of de-intoxicating them from their illusions. This kind of joke is one of the stock devices of comedy. The deceptions practised on Falstaff by Mistress Page, Mistress Ford, and Dame Quickly, or by Octavian on Baron Ochs, are possible because these two gentlemen have a fantastic idea of themselves as lady-charmers; the result of the jokes played upon them is that they are brought to a state of self-knowledge and this brings mutual forgiveness and true brotherhood. Similarly, the mock deaths of Hero and of Hermione are ways of bringing home to Claudio and to Leontes how badly they have behaved and of testing the genuineness of their repentance.

All practical jokes, friendly, harmless, or malevolent, involve deception, but not all deceptions are practical jokes. The two men digging up the street, for example, might have been two burglars who wished to recover some swag which they knew to be buried there. But, in that case, having found what they were looking for, they would have departed quietly and never been heard of again, whereas, if they are practical jokers, they must reveal afterwards what they have done, or the joke will be lost. The practical joker must not only deceive but also, when he has succeeded, unmask and reveal the truth to his victims. The satisfaction of the practical joker is the look of astonishment on the faces of others when they learn that, all the time they were convinced that they were thinking and acting on their own initiative, they were actually the puppets of another's will. Thus, though his jokes may be harmless in themselves and extremely funny, there is something slightly sinister about every practical joker, for they betray him as someone who likes to play God behind the scenes. Unlike the ordinary ambitious man who strives for a dominant position in public and enjoys giving orders and seeing others obey them, the practical joker desires to make others obey him without being

aware of his existence until the moment of his theophany when he says: "Behold the God whose puppets you have been and behold, he does not look like a god but is a human being just like yourselves."

THE SUCCESS OF A practical joker depends upon his accurate estimate of the weaknesses of others, their ignorances, their social reflexes, their unquestioned presuppositions, their obsessive desires, and even the most harmless practical joke is an expression of the joker's contempt for those he deceives.

But, in most cases, behind the joker's contempt for others lies something else, a feeling of self-insufficiency, of a self lacking in authentic feelings and desires of its own. The normal human being may have a fantastic notion of himself, but he believes in it; he thinks he knows who he is and what he wants, so that he demands recognition by others of the value he puts upon himself and must inform others of what he desires if they are to satisfy them.

But the self of the practical joker is unrelated to his joke. He manipulates others, but when he finally reveals his identity, his victims learn nothing about his nature, only something about their own; they know how it was possible for them to be deceived, but not why he chose to deceive them. The only answer that any practical joker can give to the question—"Why did you do this?"—is Iago's: "*Demand me nothing. What you know, you know.*"

In fooling others, it cannot be said that the practical joker satisfies any concrete desire of his nature; he has only demonstrated the weaknesses of others and all he can now do, once he has revealed his existence, is to bow and retire from the stage. He is only related to others, that is, so long as they are unaware of his existence; once they are made aware of it, he cannot fool them again, and the relation is broken off.

THE PRACTICAL JOKER despises his victims, but at the same time he envies them because their desires, however childish and mistaken, are real to them, whereas he has no desire which he can call his own. His goal, to make game of others, makes his existence absolutely dependent upon theirs; when he is alone, he is a nullity. Iago's self-description *I am not what I am* is correct and the negation of the Divine *I am that I am*. If the word motive is given its normal meaning of a positive purpose of the

self like sex, money, glory, etc., then the practical joker is without motive. Yet the professional joker is certainly driven, like a gambler, to his activity, but the drive is negative, a fear of lacking a concrete self, of being nobody. In any practical joker to whom playing such jokes is a passion, there is always an element of malice, a projection of his self-hatred onto others, and in the ultimate case of the absolute practical joker, this is projected onto all created things. Iago's statement "*I am not what I am*" is given its proper explanation in the *Credo* which Boito wrote for him in the libretto for Verdi's opera.

*Credo in un Dio crudel che m'ha creato
Simile a se, e che nell'ira io nomo.
Dall'viltà d'un germe e d'un atomo
Vile son nato,
Son scellerato
Perché son uomo:
E sento il fango originario in me
E credo l'uom gioco d'iniqua sorte
Dal germe della culla
Al verme dell'avel.
Vien dopo tanto irrision la Morte.
E poi? La Morte e il Nulla.*

Equally applicable to Iago is Valéry's *Ébauche d'un serpent*. The serpent speaks of God the Creator thus:

*O Vanité! Cause Première
Celui qui regne dans les Cieux
D'une voix qui fut la lumière
Ouvrit l'univers spacieux.
Comme las de son pur spectacle
Dieu lui-même a rompu l'obstacle
De sa parfaite éternité;
Il se fit Celui qui dissipe
En conséquences son Principe,
En étoiles son Unité*

and of himself thus:

Je suis Celui qui modifie

the ideal motto, surely, for Iago's coat of arms.

SINCE THE ULTIMATE GOAL of Iago is nothingness, he must not only destroy others, but himself as well. Once Othello and Desdemona are dead his "occupation's gone."

To convey this to an audience demands of the actor who plays the role the most violent contrast between the way he acts when Iago is with others and the way he acts when he is left alone. With others, he must display every virtuoso trick of dramatic technique for which great actors are praised, perfect control of movement, gesture, expression, diction, melody, and timing, and the ability to play every kind of role,

for there are as many "honest" Iagos as there are characters with whom he speaks, a Roderigo Iago, a Cassio Iago, an Othello Iago, a Desdemona Iago, etc. When he is alone, on the other hand, the actor must display every technical fault for which bad actors are criticised. He must deprive himself of all stage presence, and he must deliver the lines of his soliloquies in such a way that he makes nonsense of them. His voice must lack expression, his delivery must be atrocious, he must pause where the verse calls for no pauses, accentuate unimportant words, etc.

III

IF IAGO is so alienated from nature and society that he has no relation to time and place—he could turn up anywhere at any time—his victims are citizens of Shakespeare's Venice. To be of dramatic interest, a character must to some degree be at odds with the society of which he is a member, but his estrangement is normally an estrangement from a specific social situation.

Shakespeare's Venice is a mercantile society, the purpose of which is not military glory but the acquisition of wealth. However, human nature being what it is, like any other society it has enemies, trade rivals, pirates, etc., against whom it must defend itself, if necessary by force. Since a mercantile society regards warfare as a disagreeable but unfortunately sometimes unavoidable activity and not, like a feudal aristocracy, as a form of play, it replaces the old feudal levy by a paid professional army, non-political employees of the State, to whom fighting is their specialised job.

In a professional army, a soldier's military rank is not determined by his social status as a civilian, but by his military efficiency. Unlike the feudal knight who has a civilian home from which he is absent from time to time but to which, between campaigns, he regularly returns, the home of the professional soldier is an army camp and he must go wherever the State sends him. Othello's account of his life as a soldier, passed in exotic landscapes and climates, would have struck Hotspur as unnatural, unchivalrous, and no fun.

A professional army has its own experiences and its own code of values which are different from those of civilians. In Othello, we are shown two societies, that of the city of Venice proper and that of the Venetian army. The only character who, because he is equally estranged

from both, can simulate being equally at home in both, is Iago. With army folk he can play the blunt soldier, but in his first scene with Desdemona upon their arrival in Cyprus, he speaks like a character out of *Love's Labour's Lost*. Cassio's comment

*Madam, you may relish him more in the
soldier than the scholar*

is provoked by envy. Iago has excelled him in the euphuistic flirtatious style of conversation which he considers his forte.

RODERIGO DOES NOT FEEL at home, either with civilians or with soldiers. He lacks the charm which makes a man a success with the ladies, and the physical courage and heartiness which makes a man popular in an army mess. The sympathetic aspect of his character, until Iago destroys it, is a certain humility; he knows that he is a person of no consequence. But for Iago, he would have remained a sort of Bertie Wooster, and one suspects that the notion that Desdemona's heart might be softened by expensive presents was not his own but suggested to him by Iago.

In deceiving Roderigo, Iago has to overcome his consciousness of his inadequacy, to persuade him that he could be what he knows he is not, charming, brave, successful. Consequently, to Roderigo and, I think, to Roderigo only, Iago tells direct lies. The lie may be on a point of fact, as when he tells Roderigo that Othello and Desdemona are not returning to Venice but going to Mauritania, or a lie about the future, for it is obvious that, even if Desdemona is seducible, Roderigo will never be the man. I am inclined to think that the story Iago tells Roderigo about his disappointment over the lieutenantcy is a deliberate fabrication. One notices, for example, that he contradicts himself. At first he claims that Othello had appointed Cassio in spite of the request of three great ones of the city who had recommended Iago, but then, a few lines later, he says:

*Preferment goes by letter and affection,
Not by the old gradation, where each second
Stood heir to the first.*

In deceiving Cassio and Othello, on the other hand, Iago has to deal with characters who consciously think well of themselves but are unconsciously insecure. With them, therefore, his tactics are different; what he says to them is always possibly true.

CASSIO IS A LADIES' MAN, that is to say, a man who feels most at home in feminine company

where his looks and good manners make him popular, but is ill at ease in the company of his own sex because he is unsure of his masculinity. In civilian life he would be perfectly happy, but circumstances have made him a soldier and he has been forced by his profession into a society which is predominantly male. Had he been born a generation earlier, he would never have found himself in the army at all, but changes in the technique of warfare demand of soldiers not only the physical courage and aggressiveness which the warrior has always needed, but also intellectual gifts. The Venetian army now needs mathematicians, experts in the science of gunnery. But in all ages, the typical military mentality is conservative and resents the intellectual expert.

*A fellow
That never set a squadron in the field
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster... mere prattle without
practice
Is all his soldiership*

is a criticism which has been heard in every army mess in every war.

Like so many people who cannot bear to feel unpopular and therefore repress their knowledge that they are, Cassio becomes quarrelsome when drunk, for alcohol releases his suppressed resentment at not being admired by his comrades in arms and his wish to prove that he is what he is not, as "manly" as they are. It is significant that, when he sobers up, his regret is not that he has behaved badly by his own standards but that he has lost his reputation. The advice which Iago then gives him, to get Desdemona to plead for him with Othello, is good advice in itself, for Desdemona obviously likes him, but it is also exactly the advice a character-type like Cassio will be most willing to listen to, for feminine society is where he feels most at home.

Emilia informs Cassio that, on her own initiative, Desdemona has already spoken on his behalf and that Othello has said he will take the safest occasion by the front to restore him to his post. Hearing this, many men would have been content to leave matters as they were, but Cassio persists: the pleasure of a heart-to-heart talk with a lady about his fascinating self is too tempting.

While he is talking to Desdemona, Othello is seen approaching and she says:

Stay and hear me speak

Again, many men would have done so, but Cassio's uncasiness with his own sex, particularly when he is in disgrace, is too strong and he sneaks away, thus providing Iago with his first opportunity to make an insinuation.

Cassio is a ladies' man, not a seducer. With women of his own class, what he enjoys is socialised eroticism; he would be frightened of a serious personal passion. For physical sex he goes to prostitutes and when, unexpectedly, Bianca falls in love with him, like many of his kind, he behaves like a cad and brags of his conquest to others. Though he does not know who the owner of the handkerchief actually is, he certainly knows that Bianca will think that it belongs to another woman and to ask her to copy it is gratuitous cruelty. His smiles, gestures, and remarks about Bianca to Iago are insufferable in themselves; to Othello, who knows that he is talking about a woman, though he is mistaken as to her identity, they are an insult which only Cassio's death can avenge.

In *CINTHIO* nothing is said about the Moor's colour or religion, but Shakespeare has made Othello a black negro who has been baptised.

No doubt there are differences between colour prejudice in the 20th century and colour prejudice in the 17th, and, probably, few of Shakespeare's audience had ever seen a negro, but the slave trade was already flourishing and the Elizabethans were certainly no innocents to whom a negro was simply a comic exotic. Lines like

...an old black ram
is tupping your white ewe...

The gross clasps of a lascivious Moor...

*What delight shall she have to look on the
devil...*

are evidence that the paranoid fantasies of the white man in which the negro appears as someone who is at one and the same time less capable of self-control and more sexually potent than himself, fantasies with which, alas, we are only too familiar, already were rampant in Shakespeare's time.

The Venice of both *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* is a cosmopolitan society in which there are two kinds of social bond between its members, the bond of economic interest and the bond of personal friendship, which may coincide, run parallel with each other or conflict, and both plays are concerned with an extreme case of conflict.

Venice needs financiers to provide capital, and it needs the best general it can hire to defend it; it so happens that the most skilful financier it can find is a Jew and the best general a Negro, neither of whom the majority are willing to accept as a brother.

Though both are regarded as outsiders by the Venetian community, Othello's relation to it differs from Shylock's.

In the first place, Shylock rejects the Gentile community as firmly as the Gentile community rejects him; he is just as angry when he hears that Jessica has married Lorenzo as Brabantio is about Desdemona's elopement with Othello. In the second place, while the profession of usurer, however socially useful, is regarded as ignoble, the military profession, even though the goal of a mercantile society is not military glory, is still highly admired and, in addition, for the sedentary civilians who govern the city, it has a romantic exotic glamour which it cannot have in a feudal society in which fighting is a familiar shared experience.

Thus no Venetian would dream of spitting on Othello and, so long as there is no question of his marrying into the family, Brabantio is delighted to entertain the famous general and listen to his stories of military life. In the army, Othello is accustomed to being obeyed and treated with the respect due to his rank, and, on his rare visits to the city, he is treated by the white aristocracy as someone important and interesting. Outwardly, nobody treats him as an outsider as they treat Shylock. Consequently, it is easy for him to persuade himself that he is accepted as a brother and when Desdemona accepts him as a husband, he seems to have proof of this.

It is painful to hear him say

*But that I love the gentle Desdemona
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription or confine
For the sea's worth*

for the condition of the outsider is always unhoused and free. He does not or will not recognise that Brabantio's view of the match

*If such actions may have passage free,
Bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be*

is shared by all his fellow senators, and the arrival of news about the Turkish fleet prevents their saying so because their need of Othello's military skill is too urgent for them to risk offending him.

IF ONE COMPARES *Othello* with the other plays in which Shakespeare treats the subject of male jealousy, *A Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*, one notices that Othello's jealousy is of a peculiar kind.

Leontes is a classical case of paranoid sexual jealousy due to repressed homosexual feelings. He has absolutely no evidence that Hermione and Polixenes have committed adultery and his entire court are convinced of their innocence, but he is utterly possessed by his fantasy. As he says to Hermione: "Your actions are my dreams." But, mad as he is, "the twice-nine changes of the Watery Starre" which Polixenes has spent at the Bohemian court, make the act of adultery physically possible so that, once the notion has entered his head, neither Hermione nor Polixenes nor the court can prove that it is false. Hence the appeal to the Oracle.

Posthumous is perfectly sane and is convinced against his will that Imogen has been unfaithful because Iachimo offers him apparently irrefutable evidence that adultery has taken place.

But both the mad Leontes and the sane Posthumous react in the same way: "My wife has been unfaithful; therefore she must be killed and forgotten." That is to say, it is only as a husband that their lives are affected. As king of Bohemia, as a warrior, they function as if nothing had happened.

In *Othello*, thanks to Iago's manipulations, Cassio and Desdemona behave in a way which would make it not altogether unreasonable for Othello to suspect that they were in love with each other, but the time factor rules out the possibility of adultery having been actually committed. Some critics have taken the double time in the play to be merely a dramaturgical device for speeding the action which the audience in the theatre will never notice. I believe, however, that Shakespeare meant the audience to notice it, as in *The Merchant of Venice* he meant them to notice the discrepancy between Belmont time and Venice time.

If Othello had simply been jealous of the feelings for Cassio he imagined Desdemona to have, he would have been sane enough, guilty at worst of a lack of trust in his wife. But Othello is not merely jealous of feelings which might exist. He demands proof of an act which could not have taken place, and the effect on him of believing in this physical impossibility goes far beyond wishing to kill her. It is not only his wife who has betrayed him but the

whole universe; life has become meaningless, his occupation is gone.

This reaction might be expected if Othello and Desdemona were a pair like Romeo and Juliet, or Antony and Cleopatra, whose love was an all-absorbing passion like that of Tristan and Isolde, but Shakespeare takes care to inform us that it was not.

When Othello asks leave to take Desdemona with him to Cyprus, he stresses the spiritual element in his love.

*I therefore beg it not
To please the palate of my appetite
Nor to comply with heat, the young affects
In me defunct, and proper satisfaction,
But to be free and bounteous of her mind.*

Though the imagery in which he expresses his jealousy is sexual—what other kind of images could he use?—Othello's marriage is important to him less as a sexual relationship than as a symbol of being loved and accepted as a person, a brother in the Venetian community. The monster in his own mind, too hideous to be shown, is the fear he has suppressed that he is only valued for his social usefulness to the City. But for his occupation, he would be treated as a black barbarian.

The over-credulous, over-good-natured character which, as Iago tells us, Othello had always displayed is a tell-tale symptom. He has had to be over-credulous in order to compensate for his repressed suspicions. Both in his happiness at the beginning of the play and in his cosmic despair later, Othello reminds one more of Timon of Athens than of Leontes.

SINCE WHAT REALLY matters to Othello is that Desdemona should love him as the person he really is, Iago has only to get him to suspect that she does not, to release the repressed fears and resentments of a lifetime, and the question of what she has done or not done is irrelevant.

Iago treats Othello as an analyst treats a patient, except that, of course, his intention is to kill not to cure. Everything he says is designed to bring to Othello's consciousness what he has already guessed is there. Accordingly he has no need to tell lies. Even his speech "*I lay with Cassio lately*" can be a truthful account of something which actually happened; from what we know of Cassio, he might very well have such a dream as Iago reports. Even when he has worked Othello up to a degree of passion where he would risk nothing by telling

a direct lie, his answer is equivocal and its interpretation is left to Othello.

OTHELLO: *What hath he said?*

IAGO: *Faith that he did. I know not what he did.*

OTHELLO: *But what?*

IAGO: *Lie.*

OTHELLO: *With her?*

IAGO: *With her, on her, what you will.*

Nobody can offer Leontes absolute proof that his jealousy is baseless; similarly, as Iago is careful to point out, Othello can have no proof that Desdemona really is the person she seems to be.

IAGO MAKES HIS first decisive impression when, speaking as a Venetian with first-hand knowledge of civilian life, he draws attention to Desdemona's hoodwinking of her father.

IAGO: *I would not have your free and noble nature*

*Out of self-bounty be abused, look to't:
I know your country disposition well:
In Venice they do let God see the pranks*

*They dare not show their husbands:
their best conscience*

Is not to leave undone but keep unknown.

OTHELLO: *Dost thou say so?*

IAGO: *She did deceive her father, marrying you.*

*And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks,
She loved them most.*

OTHELLO: *And so she did.*

IAGO: *Why, go to then.*

*She that so young could give out such a seeming
To seal her father's eyes up, close as oak,
He thought 'twas witchcraft.*

A few lines later, he refers directly to the colour difference.

*Not to affect many proposed matches,
Of her own clime, complexion and degree,
Whereto we see in all things nature tends,
Fie, we may smell in such a will most rank,
Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.
But pardon me: I do not in position
Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear
Her will, recoiling to her better judgment,
May fall to match you with her country-forms,
And happily repent.*

Once Othello allows himself to suspect that Desdemona may not be the person she seems, she cannot allay the suspicion by speaking the truth, but she can appear to confirm it by telling a lie. Hence the catastrophic effect when she denies having lost the handkerchief.

If Othello cannot trust her, then he can trust nobody and nothing and precisely what she has done is not important. In the scene where he pretends that the Castle is a brothel of which Emilia is the Madam, he accuses Desdemona, not of adultery with Cassio, but of nameless orgies.

*Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?
Was this fair paper, this most goodly book
Made to write whore on. What committed?
Committed. O thou public commoner,
I should make very forges of my cheeks
That would to cinders burn up modesty
Did I but speak thy deeds.*

And, as Mr. Eliot has pointed out, in his farewell speech his thoughts are not on Desdemona at all but upon his relation to Venice, and he ends by identifying himself with another outsider, the Moslem Turk, who beat a Venetian and traduced the state.

EVERYBODY must pity Desdemona, but I cannot bring myself to like her. Her determination to marry Othello—it was she who virtually did the proposing—seems the romantic crush of a silly schoolgirl rather than a mature affection: it is Othello's adventures, so unlike the civilian life she knows, which captivate her rather than Othello as a person. He may not have practised witchcraft, but, in fact, she is spell-bound. And despite all Brabantio's prejudices, her deception of her own father makes an unpleasant impression: Shakespeare does not allow us to forget that the shock of the marriage kills him.

Then, she seems more aware than is agreeable of the honour she has done Othello by becoming his wife. When Iago tells Cassio that "our General's wife is now the General" and, soon afterwards, soliloquises

*His soul is so enfeathered to her love
That she may make, unmake, do what she list
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function*

he is, no doubt, exaggerating, but there is much truth in what he says. Before Cassio speaks to her, she has already discussed him with her husband and learned that he is to be reinstated as soon as is opportune. A sensible wife would have told Cassio this and left matters alone. In continuing to badger Othello, she betrays a desire to prove to herself and to Cassio that she can make her husband do as she pleases.

Her lie about the handkerchief is, in itself, a trivial fib, but had she really regarded her hus-

band as her equal, she might have admitted the loss. As it is, she is frightened because she is suddenly confronted with a man whose sensibility and superstitions are alien to her.

Though her relation with Cassio is perfectly innocent, one cannot but share Iago's doubts as to the durability of the marriage. It is worth noting that, in the willow-song scene with Emilia, she speaks with admiration of Ludovico and then turns to the topic of adultery. Of course, she discusses this in general terms and is shocked by Emilia's attitude, but she does discuss the subject and she does listen to what Emilia has to say about husbands and wives. It is as if she had suddenly realised that she had made a *mésalliance* and that the sort of man she ought to have married was someone of her own class and colour like Ludovico. Given a few more years of Othello and of Emilia's influence and she might well, one feels, have taken a lover.

AND SO ONE comes back to where one started, to Iago, the sole agent in the play.

A play, as Shakespeare said, is a mirror held up to nature. This particular mirror bears the date 1604 but, when we look into it, the face that confronts us is our own in 1961. We hear Iago say the same words and see him do the same things as an Elizabethan audience heard and saw, but what they mean to us cannot be exactly the same. To his first audience and even, maybe, to his creator, Iago appeared to be just another Machiavellian villain who might exist in real life but with whom one would never dream of identifying oneself. To us, I think, he is a much more alarming figure; we cannot hiss at him when he appears as we can hiss at the villain in a Western movie because none of us can honestly say that he does not understand how such a wicked person can exist. For is not Iago, the practical joker, a parabolic figure for the autonomous pursuit of scientific knowledge through experiment which we all, whether we are scientists or not, take for granted as natural and right?

As Nietzsche said, experimental science is the last flower of asceticism. The investigator must discard all his feelings, hopes, and fears as a human person and reduce himself to a disembodied observer of events upon which he passes no value judgment. Iago is an ascetic. "Love," he says, "is merely a lust of the blood, and a permission of the will."

THE KNOWLEDGE SOUGHT BY SCIENCE is only one kind of knowledge. Another kind is that implied by the Biblical phrase "Then Adam knew Eve, his wife," and it is this kind I still mean when I say "I know John Smith very well." I cannot know in this sense without being known in return. If I know John Smith well, he must also know me well.

But, in the scientific sense of knowledge, I can only know that which does not and cannot know me. Feeling unwell, I go to my doctor who examines me, says "You have Asian flu," and gives me an injection. The Asian virus is as unaware of my doctor's existence as his victims are of a practical joker.

Further, to-know in the scientific sense means, ultimately, to-have-power-over. To the degree that human beings are authentic persons, unique and self-creating, they cannot be scientifically known. But human beings are not pure persons, like angels; they are also biological organisms, almost identical in their functioning, and, to a greater or lesser degree, they are neurotic, that is to say, less free than they imagine because of fears and desires of which they have no personal knowledge but could and ought to have.

Hence, it is always possible to reduce human beings to the status of things which are completely scientifically knowable and completely controllable.

This can be done by direct action on their bodies with drugs, lobotomies, deprivation of sleep, etc. The difficulty about this method is that your victims will know that you are trying to enslave them and, since nobody wishes to be a slave, they will object, so that it can only be practised upon minorities, like prisoners and lunatics who are physically incapable of resisting.

THE OTHER METHOD is to play on the fears and desires of which you are aware and they are not until they enslave themselves. In this case, concealment of your real intention is not only possible but essential, for if people know they are being played upon, they will not believe what you say or do what you suggest. An advertisement based on snob appeal, for example, can only succeed with people who are unaware that they are snobs and that their snobbish feelings are being appealed to, and to whom, therefore, your advertisement seems as honest as Iago seems to Othello.

Iago's treatment of Othello conforms to Bacon's definition of scientific enquiry as putting Nature to the question. If a member of the audience were to interrupt the play and ask him: "What are you doing?"—could not Iago answer with a boyish giggle, "Nothing. I'm only trying to find out what Othello is really like." And we must admit that his experiment is highly successful. By the end of the play he does know the scientific truth about the object to which he has reduced Othello. That is what makes his parting shot "*What you know, you know*" so terrifying, for by then Othello has become a thing, incapable of knowing anything.

AND WHY SHOULDN'T Iago do this? After all, he has certainly acquired knowledge. What makes it impossible for us to condemn him self-

righteously is that, in our culture, we have all accepted the notion that the right to know is absolute and unlimited. The gossip column is one side of the medal; the cobalt bomb the other. We are quite prepared to admit that, while food and sex are good in themselves, an uncontrolled pursuit of either is not, but it is difficult for us to believe that intellectual curiosity is a desire like any other, and to realise that correct knowledge and truth are not identical. To apply a categorical imperative to knowing, so that, instead of asking "What can I know?" we ask "What, at this moment, am I meant to know?"—to entertain the possibility that the only knowledge which can be true for us is the knowledge we can live up to—that seems to all of us crazy and almost immoral. But, in that case, who are we to say to Iago—"No, you mustn't"?

Circus Lion

Lumbering haunches, pussyfoot tread, a pride of
Lions under the arcs
Walk in, leap up, sit pedestalled there and glum
As a row of Dickensian clerks.

Their eyes are slag. Only a muscle flickering,
A bored, theatrical roar
Witness now to the furnaces that drove them
Exultant along the spoor.

In preyward, elastic leap they are sent through paper
Hoops at another's will
And a whip's crack: afterwards, in their cages,
They tear the provided kill.

Caught young, can this public animal ever dream of
Stars, distances and thunders?
Does he twitch in sleep for ticks, dried water-holes,
Rogue elephants, or hunters?

Sawdust, not burning desert, is the ground
Of his to-fro, to-fro, pacing,
Barred with the zebra shadows that imply
Sun's free wheel, man's coercing.

See this abdicated beast, once king
Of them all, nibble his claws:
Not anger enough left—no, nor despair—
To break his teeth on the bars.

C. Day Lewis

Two Poems by Hilary Corke

The River

So we went with my father in a two-cylinder Rover
To Tewkesbury, where we hired a boat (he had been
A rowing-man in his time). By King John's bridge
The water-troops were herded by sharp arches;
We passed by that, and then the widening scene
Of liquid movement counting her pebbles over.

The banks reclined, with short fat willows leaning
To leave their long-leaved hair-do's and discuss
What garters of light were rippling up their thighs:
The river-skin gleamed broad and luminous,
Reflecting stilly loose-strife, codlins and cream,
Till we multiplied their stars with human meaning.

The plash of the oars, the grunt of the rowlocks and
The hushing ridges the mild water made
Between my fingers dangling. Overhead
The sky was an equal river, pent in trees,
With rare white boats that ran before the breeze
But no more ruffled or more tenanted.

My father rowed in a vest, with large moustaches
Drooping safe in the shade of a small straw hat.
We took our turns at the rudder. And now we see
Twining Ferry, a quiet white pub with its feet
In the sleepy Avon water, and flowering rushes
Spatting the alder ankles, and gaze to greet

Round only one bend more the familiar landing
Where we shall tie and carefully clamber ashore
And the rug will be spread and the sandwiches and the apples
And Corona fruit-drinks appear from a heavenly store
In a pasture-corner alive with dimples and dapples;
And the peace of repletion that passeth all understanding.

O and the electric dragonflies like neons
And the bathe (One Hour after Lunch) as one opened one's eyes
Far below water into a thick green world
Of soupy shadowing, and the water-boatmen
Swimming on stilts and yes! the frog-green furled
Leafspikes of the arrowhead and the surprise
Of the mussel-shells with pearls that tiled one tiny
Beach in an inlet, and then the nettle-thickets
All round the disused lock with knots of spiny
Black caterpillars that would be tortoiseshells;
And the roofless mill, and the notice that said "Beware,
This bridge is dangerous." Cross it if you dare!

We dared and crossed it, and the August sun
 Sloped colder down its slideway and our mother's
 Voice was calling "Children! It's time, children."
 The swifter flight downstream. She put to bed
 Fifty inches of visions, bright and bewildering.
 Then sleep came sudden and the river fled.

So then I slept thirty years and awoke where I am,
 In a parked car by a bypass where a brash
 River of animate iron pours honking through
 Channels of Nuhomes like a pustular rash,
 Though still from the butcherly-pollarded elms a few
 Unabashable sparrows regard the blue. . . .

It is not just my childhood, not mine alone,
 But what is happening to almost everything
 Seeing that almost everywhere and swiftly
 In once not so small England's narrowing range
 Both the innocent and the other and strange
 Grow hourly so all-knowing and all-known.

Boltons at Midwinter

Boltons at midwinter, the laburnum locked,
 The double may in chains, the season's fetters:
 The cries of children from the frozen playground.

Leaves of the planes lay sodden, now lie stiff
 Below the gothic arms; the gutter's jungle
 Compacts in floors of browned and shooting crystal.

And the bitten lip of the iron park stays dumb,
 The impressive stuccos of the residences
 Questioning with reflected light in vain

From blind bright glass that holds minutely imaged,
 Spent, out of India, down the contractive air
 Fluttering to lair, a single windbeat plane.

Mudflat, Saxon saltings, mudflat of Thames
 Creeky and rushy with fish-eating waterbird
 Zigging on jagged estuarial skies,

Though paved and groved and grooved with hurrying buses
 You keep your sourness still that still abides
 Clenched in your sewers below the skin one rides.

And northern stillness (your returning mew of children),
 English holding of breath like bread asleep
 Before the working leaven and the oven,

As through your planes the noon 'plane from Karachi
 So only in your pewter marble move
 The forking veins of negroes, loose and burning.

T. R. Fyvel

The Teddy Boy International

Unhappy Hooligans

THE VIEW that the Teddy boy movement and the increase of lawlessness among British youth represent something new, a "new wave" in delinquency, arising from a specific combination of contemporary social conditions, is strengthened if one looks at the international scene. Reports of youthful disturbances similar to those in Britain have come from a number of countries; mostly they are countries which are technically and industrially advanced (although there are also interesting stories from others, like the report from Greece that local Teddy boys, called by this name, had engaged in the pastime of throwing yoghurt in people's faces and as punishment had their heads shaved, evidently a successful deterrent). Especially during the last few years, it was not hard to find newspaper reports of disturbances to match those of Britain; in the first place from the United States, where the public has been shocked by such startling revelations as that in a single year about 5 per cent of American children get into trouble with the police or the courts, and that youngsters under 21 constitute over half those arrested for car thefts and robbery.

Daytona Beach, Florida. Nearly 4,000 car enthusiasts in their teens fought police and firemen for five hours to-day in riots which began when police ordered a group of youngsters to stop making acceleration tests on a main street. The youngsters slashed tyres of cars, smashed shop windows and tore down advertisements before armed police dispersed them.

New York. New violence flared yesterday among packs of unruly teenagers stalking the streets of New York. The newest outbreak, in more than a week of tenement jungle warfare that has claimed four lives and caused several critical injuries, occurred in Brooklyn. Two men

were shot by a gang that ambushed them with a shotgun blast of birdshot as they left a restaurant. The victims of the unprovoked attack were taken to a hospital for treatment of painful injuries. The shooting came only a few hours after police prevented an all-out gang battle in the Bronx between members of the Scorpion and Fordham Baldies gangs, made up of both white and Negro boys. Detectives moved in on the boys in a park. They arrested 13 youths and seized an assortment of lethal weapons. New York City officials scheduled a meeting with State Youth Commission officials to-day to determine whether State help is needed to combat the teenage crime wave.

Or to turn to Europe, the following reports from Germany, Austria, France, and Sweden are typical of many which could have been quoted:

Duisburg, Germany. Thirty-three young people were arrested yesterday after a night in which hundreds of excited people had milled in the streets, smashing street lights, damaging private cars and starting free fights. The disturbance, which reached the proportion of a minor riot, followed similar incidents in Hamburg, Frankfurt and Brunswick. A police spokesman said that hardly a day seemed to pass without reports of some pitched but aimless battles between young rowdies and members of the public, the police or the new armed forces.

Vienna. The *Halbstarken*—the leather-jacketed "Teddy Boy" gangs of Western Germany—have spread to Austria, and the steady increase in teenage delinquency in the country is alarming the Austrian people. Nearly every day in the past few months police have reported at least one clash between the *Halbstarken* gangs in Vienna. Police patrols have had to be increased in many Vienna districts to keep down violence. Criminal activity by teenagers has trebled compared with pre-war. The Vienna police are taking concerted action to put down gangs. They comb

out regularly the public-houses and coffee-houses where the gangs have been known to meet.

Paris. Twenty-six adolescents between 14 and 20 years arrested and detained; clubs, bicycle chains, and buckled belts and similar weapons confiscated by the police. This was the balance-sheet of an expedition organised last night in the 15th Arrondissement by a band of *blousons noirs* (blackjackets). For several months the police had watched a band of young ruffians from the Saint-Lambert quarter, who had been indulging in public violence. Last night, about a hundred boys from this band, all dressed in leather jackets and blue jeans, gathered in an organised force at a street crossing for a battle with a rival band from Vanves. As the latter did not turn up, the *blousons noirs* began to smash up a café. The arrival of the police started off scenes of child chase amidst the traffic. . . .

Stockholm. Gang criminality had hitherto been of minor importance in Sweden. Since 1958, however, several youthful gangs in the real sense of the word have been exposed, most of them in Stockholm. These gangs are mostly made up of youngsters in the age-group 13-18 years, mostly from the same city block, who terrorise other young people as well as adults. . . . They are ruthless towards one of their own who does not conform to the behaviour pattern of the gang. Their weapons include stilettos, air guns and bicycle chains. In October, 1958, one such gang caused a sensation when the members brutally beat up a boy in the very centre of Stockholm for having broken with the gang. . . .

Such reports from Sweden, with its tradition of neutrality, its high living standard and enlightened welfare institutions, have attracted special attention because the lawlessness of the young rioters has been on a surprising scale. And, just to show that not only capitalist countries are involved, the following story from the Soviet newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolyeti* (January 22nd, 1959) shows that conditions in Leningrad parks are at times not so altogether different from those in Central Park, New York:

Moscow. It is a shocking event that through lack of proper foresight, a Moscow youth has been stabbed to death by eight hooligans in a Leningrad park. Our seventeen-year-old Comrade Vadim Trainin of Moscow had gone to Leningrad early this month on a vacation. While there he contacted the Young Communist League headquarters and asked to go on patrol with one of their squads whose task it is to aid the militia in keeping order in the city. Together with two other boys and three girls, Trainin was put into a squad which was assigned to patrol duty in the city's Lenin Park.

In the park, the squad was set upon by a hooligan gang and it appears that the two other

boys and the three girls abandoned young Trainin who was thereupon stabbed to death.

In this needless tragedy, it must be said that the Leningrad Young Communist League has evidently treated this killing with an unjustifiable lightmindedness. We find it essential that the perpetrators of this crime should pay the fitting penalty. We further recommend that all Young Communist squads on patrol duty should be of adequate size and should include young people able to handle trouble.

There is, in fact, evidence that what the Communist press calls "hooliganism" is a serious problem in the Soviet Union and the East European satellite states. In Communist Poland this is openly admitted. How large the problem is in the Soviet Union is not easy to say. However, the censored Soviet press only admits defects in Soviet life when they have reached major proportions, so that when Soviet newspapers repeatedly complained about drunkenness and hooliganism among the youth in cities like Moscow, Leningrad, Tiflis, Odessa, Rostov, and Sverdlovsk, it is fair to conclude that delinquency had become a major headache for the Soviet authorities.

To turn to Asia, consistent reports from post-war Japan tell of insubordination at high schools or in the streets in American style and almost on American scale. Figures quoted in alarmed articles in the Japanese press reveal that, as compared with 1938, the number of Japanese youngsters, including students, picked up on charges of vandalism, truancy, and drunkenness had increased just about tenfold.

All in all, therefore, the evidence seems to be that there is a new spirit of lawlessness abroad among modern youth which has found organised and violent expression in a number of advanced industrial countries.

A New Phenomenon?

DOES ALL this amount to a new social phenomenon, to be studied as such?

I think it does, even though some of those working in the field argue that when one considers individual cases, there is nothing new in the pattern of delinquency, which is by now well documented. A common individual starting-point is insecurity in childhood, due to a broken home or bad family background. A child from such a home, feeling emotionally insecure and unloved, rejects rather than leaves his home. School to such a youngster often appears a mere meaningless accompaniment of

the home which has failed him; the one prospect of security, esteem, and status seems to lie in the street gang and defiance of society: and this often is the start of delinquency. This established pattern, it is said, has in no way changed, except in such detail as the fashion for exaggerated costume. Secondly, it has also been argued that the whole delinquency problem is not as large and general as is commonly made out. The official statistics of the United States, for instance, so as to avoid racial distinction, fail to reveal what a large proportion of juvenile crime is concentrated among ethnic groups like Negroes or Puerto Rican immigrants, living under squalid conditions of discrimination which must encourage crime.

Thirdly, there is of course the war. In Europe, the children born in 1939-45 are the adolescents of to-day. In Britain, case studies have traced some adolescent lawlessness back to the effect of war-time dislocation on children—the bombing of British cities, the disruption of family life through evacuation, the prolonged absence of millions of fathers. Germany, of course, suffered still more. In view of the large number of young Germans who have grown up as orphans or with only one parent, the surprising thing is not the level of German juvenile crime and rowdiness but that there is not more of it. The same could be said of Japan. The unruliness of Japanese students must have its roots at least in part in the disturbance of the war, reinforced by the shocks of defeat, the atom bombs, and surrender. Again, in countries like Russia and Poland, military and civilian loss of life was far greater than anything experienced in the West. The effects on the minds of young children must have been catastrophic and it is therefore not surprising if under the gloss of Communist repression and censorship, these effects have been working themselves out through such phenomena as widespread adolescent delinquency.

ALL THESE ARGUMENTS carry some weight, yet they cannot really explain the international wave of youthful unrest—they certainly cannot explain it away. For one thing, the delinquency figures in many countries are simply too large. In Britain, for example, they are much higher than they should be in view of the progress in social welfare on every side. It seems also clear that the aftermath of the war can be only a very partial explanation of the unrest. Neutral Sweden, to quote only one instance, has after

all been beset by this same problem. In the United States, again, the figure of young people convicted has risen so regularly year by year—by now uninterruptedly for nine years—and the lawlessness has been spreading from the big cities into the small towns and suburbia—that, whatever one may think of war aftermath, the phenomenon must be connected with current developments in American society, as indeed it very obviously is.

Furthermore, the recent rise in delinquency has some very special features. In most countries it has occurred in conditions of rising material welfare, which has caused some German experts to give it the name of *die Wohlfahrtskriminalität*—"welfare criminality." Again, in a general reading of reports, from other countries as well as from Britain, the new youthful violence seems to have become curiously stylised, linked with a special gang life and special fashions. Not all those who dressed in Teddy Boy style or in the style of the *Halbstarken* in Germany and Austria were actual delinquents, perhaps indeed not more than a fraction. Nevertheless, the spirit of rebellion denoted by the costume and the rise in youthful criminality have noticeably gone together. And they have gone together rather viciously. In the United States, public opinion has been roused by the fully-fledged gangsterism recently displayed by juvenile street gangs. What brought Britain's Teddy Boys their international publicity was not merely their eccentric dress and trend towards violence—in earlier days there was plenty of violence in industrial England—but their cult of amorality and the brutality with which they have set upon out-numbered victims. (Again, without stressing it too far, we can bring a parallel from behind the Iron Curtain. When Soviet newspapers in 1960 carried renewed articles against "young criminals and bandits" and threatened the death penalty for those caught with flick-knives, it indicated that the Soviet authorities faced a similar problem of youthful amorality.)

APART FROM such violent crime, and to go back to youthful lawlessness in the wider sense, it is also significant that in various countries new names have simultaneously been coined for these young offenders who are readily identifiable by their provocative dress and attitude. In the United States they have been called "Rebels without a Cause," a name which sums up the movement. In Britain, the Edwardian dress associated with the rowdiness gave rise to the

name "Teddy Boys," which survived the costume. In Western Germany and Austria, the similar gangs of provocatively-dressed adolescent rowdies have been called the *Halbstarken*, the "half-strong." In Sweden, trouble-makers were referred to as the *Skinnknutte* or "leather-jackets," a name originally for gangs of youths obsessed by a craze for motor-cycle racing in the streets. France similarly has her *blousons noirs*, or "blackjackets." The Japanese, elegant as ever, have coined the name *taiyozoku*, or "children of the sun," for their new groups of anti-social youth. The Australians, more briefly, have termed theirs "bodgies." And it is instructive that Soviet abuse has been directed not only at the lowly mass of hooligans but also at the *stilyagi*, or "style boys," a type of defiant, educated Soviet youths whose elaborate hairstyles, draped jackets, and crêpe soles, as well as their addiction to jazz, show that in spite of censorship they have tried to model themselves on the Teddy Boy international.

WHAT DOES it all amount to? I found myself asking this question one night in Hamburg when by chance I happened to be a spectator of one of the *Halbstarken* mass outbursts. The immediate pretext for it had been a concert by the rock-and-roll experts Bill Haley and his Comets. Earlier concerts by Bill Haley in West Berlin and Essen had already led to mass teenage riots and vandalism, and so it happened in Hamburg. When I came on the scene, a crowd of two thousand adolescent boys and girls, who earlier had stopped the recital and smashed chairs and windows in the hall, was still milling in a dense mob in the square outside. They seemed in a frenzy, yelling insults and in some cases fighting squads of baffled policemen, who were trying to clear the streets, at first good-naturedly, but in the end, amidst rising tempers, found it necessary to disperse hysterical youngsters by use of tear-gas. The whole spectacle was baffling. Germany in a not so recent past had seen riots over mass unemployment; later, the political mob violence of the Nazis; but this was quite different. These German teenagers were living in a dull, prosperous Germany; they looked healthy and well-dressed—so what lay behind their excited frenzy, their anger, their trivial rebellion without a cause?

Or, for that matter, what lay behind the violence of the American street gangs or that of the Teddy Boys? Or what was the reason for the striking rise in juvenile crime in the 'fifties

in so many advanced countries? Adding it all up, it seemed hard to doubt that there was something afoot, that there were some aspects of our materialistic, mechanised 20th-century society—something in the way of life, in the break-up of traditional authority, in the values of the news in the headlines, which encouraged widespread youthful cynicism in general and rather violent delinquency in particular. It is against this wider background of the unrest of a generation that, I think, the Teddy Boy should be viewed. However, in each country this unrest has also taken on its own characteristic cultural forms.

The Post-war Restoration

SEEN IN AN international context if it is to be also seen in proportion, British experience is not unique. Clearly, there is something in the spirit of this post-war age of ours which encourages a particular kind of youthful malaise. Travelling through Europe, talking to people specially concerned with youth problems, one gains the impression of something like a near-universal trend at work, though it is also important to realise that its impact is as yet very uneven in different countries.

But then the history of Western Europe since the war has altogether been unexpected. It is already no longer easy to recall the starting-point, the end of the war and its first chaotic aftermath. From the later years of the war, there is one persistent image which has remained in my own mind—a composite image of bombed, jagged ruins flanking dusty roads, along which, as we drove, one overtook groups of numbed, shocked refugees—the picture seemed to symbolise the destruction of a continent. My personal tour had begun in Southern Italy, near Naples, where in the first weeks of occupation hungry, ragged boys from the slums offered Allied soldiers their sisters (or that was the tale) and stole every movable part of a jeep left unattended for a minute. Their sheer predatoriality seemed like an echo from life of centuries ago. I can recall many troubled discussions during which we, the uneasy victors, concluded that this lawlessness would be an enduring pattern to be repeated all over Europe, and more especially in the countries which had most directly and most cruelly suffered from the war.

Not a bit of it, of course. Southern Italy, it is true, still represents a special problem. Since the war Italy has remained a state virtually divided

into two separate countries with quite different standards of living. Southern Italy is still a museum piece of a region where the classic European extremes of wealth and poverty of a century ago remain disgracefully preserved. With this, not surprisingly, goes a historic tradition in youthful crime. Boys and girls from the most poverty-stricken families still grow up, as it were, in the spirit of an anti-society. A person steals or cheats simply in order to eat; the rich and powerful are always regarded as natural oppressors; if a living cannot be got by straightforward work, it will be got by other means. (Crime figures in parts of the Italian South are, in fact, *six times higher* than in the cities of the North.)

However, in the rest of Italy, especially the industrialised North, and in the other two Western European countries which had suffered the greatest losses, the most extensive dislocation and material damage during the war, France and Germany—the expected did *not* happen. The surprising development in these countries is not that there should have been a post-war increase in delinquency, but that it was no greater, that the problem should have remained relatively so small.

ON THE FACE OF IT, it would not have been surprising if France, Italy, and Western Germany had after the war been troubled by juvenile delinquency on a really large scale. All three countries were for some years catastrophically affected by war; the population of each country witnessed the shock of defeat, the collapse of a régime, occupation by foreign troops; each suffered heavy casualties; vast numbers of men were taken away as prisoners-of-war, families were disrupted, children grew up shocked, harassed, and deprived. Yet in the outcome the rise in post-war delinquency in these countries was relatively less than in Britain, less than in neutral Sweden, and considerably less than in the United States.

During the immediate period after the war, while chaos still ruled, the relative orderliness and quietism of youth was perhaps not so surprising. The very shock of defeat produced not only numbness but also a positive response. The need to overcome the enormous difficulties in the way of reconstruction, the pent-up desire for normalcy—these things became like an overriding purpose to which everyone in some way subscribed, and which held the fabric of society together. But there was also something else in

these three countries. In all of them, I feel, traditional bourgeois culture was more deeply entrenched than elsewhere—the essentially bourgeois society of these countries was therefore not only able to recover more quickly from the ravages of war, but also to offer stronger resistance against the mass attack of the voices of the new society.

THIS CAN be seen in the special circumstances of each country—certainly in France. One might have thought that the odds would be against orderliness in everyday French life.

For most of the post-war period, the country suffered from governmental instability and general cynicism in politics; the currency was repeatedly de-valued; during the 'fifties, one unpopular colonial war was lost while another went on being waged without end. Other aspects of French life, too, might have been thought likely to cause unrest and delinquency. The difference between wealth and poverty in many parts of France remained sharp and provocative. The French housing shortage was particularly acute. By North European standards, French slums, even those bordering on the luxury districts of Paris, were appalling. Overcrowding drove French children into the street and created a peculiarly French juvenile vagrancy problem. In Paris alone, hundreds of children are still annually picked up on this charge. The problem of alcoholism, destructive of family life, was also rather larger in France than elsewhere. In addition, for a rich country, France was relatively deficient in sport and recreation facilities and in youth clubs.

Considering all this, French teenagers have been astonishingly law-abiding, and this, to my mind, is due to two things. The first is the resilience of French bourgeois culture, springing from its conservatism. Under the massive impact of post-war industrialisation, French life, too, has been affected by the new outlook of the affluent society which goes with mass consumption, mass advertising, glossy magazines, and television. Yet the resistance to this outlook in France has also been particularly strong. In this respect, at least, the notorious *immobilisme* of French society may have its advantages. The narrowness of French small-town life, the class antagonisms, the deep-rooted differences between Catholics and anti-clericalists, town and country, north and south, the jealously maintained local attachments, the still living proud tradition of

individual craftsmanship as well as that of un-economic small shops and bars—all these aspects of French particularism, whatever their defects, have also helped to protect the country, and especially French youth, against that sense of rootlessness and the anonymity which emanates from a mass consumption society.

In the second place, although this is also changing, French family life is still noticeably different from that of the English-speaking countries and so is the French education system. Both are still authoritarian, in a bourgeois sense. While French schools insist on intellectual discipline—permissive education is much less known—moral responsibility for the children remains with the parents. By comparison with their British or American counterparts, French boys and girls still live rather less among their own age-group, and are much more at home under the eye of their parents. Like certain old-fashioned touches in French school education, this traditionalism in family life may have its disadvantages, but it also seems a stabilising influence on youth. Nor is it confined to the Catholic middle class. While the French Communist Party with its millions of adherents may no longer be a dynamic political force, it is worth noting that it remains a powerful social force. In its day, the Party created a whole framework for family and social life, and much of this still remains intact, especially in solid working-class areas. In such areas, boys and girls attend Communist clubs and go hiking in Communist groups, but in a prescribed way and no less under the eye of their parents than bourgeois children.

MUCH THE SAME applies to Italian youth. In post-war Italy, too, one might have expected a large-scale delinquency problem to arise. The peninsula was fought over for two terrible years, refugees trudged before the Allied armies, families were disrupted, and post-war recovery came only slowly. The end of the war also saw the abject collapse of the whole Fascist view of life drilled into the young—the picture of their fathers in black shirts was suddenly ridiculous. The contrast between the booming industrial North and the stagnant, poverty-stricken South remained also as sharp as ever. From this contrast alone, as young Southerners left home to seek work in the North, one might have expected a sharp rise in Italian adolescent delinquency, yet this has not happened. As the Rome correspondent of *The Times* reported,

those young Italians who imitated their wilder counterparts abroad were more trying to keep up with the spirit of the age, rather than rebelling against it.

What is generally absent is that special kind of delinquency based on a need for self-assertion and a rejection of the limits of conformity. Italian youth is still very conformist.

For most observers who have watched the excited reactions of the Italian authorities and press to relatively small instances of Italian youth kicking over the traces, the reasons are fairly plain. Even in the wealthiest and most industrialised cities of the North, Italian society is still heavily traditional in good bourgeois style. The tradition is, of course, that of centuries of Catholic social and family life, but this is not all—the tradition of Catholic religious observance has proved no bar to rising delinquency in Brooklyn or Boston. The Italian tradition is also that of a most deep-rooted bourgeois culture; even in anti-Catholic working-class areas, no young Italian is as yet so uprooted from family, village, church, and local culture as his counterpart in London or New York. The way of life for youth is still heavily prescribed by its elders.

AN EVEN more striking example of a bourgeois society resisting change, and so resisting the new delinquency, is that of Western Germany.

Even if one takes the atmosphere of continuous economic boom into account, the unexpected and dull tranquillity of recent German life has indeed been extraordinary, for quite apart from the psychologically ravaging effect of the Nazi régime and the war, actual physical German casualties were enormous. In as many as three million German families of 1957, one parent was missing, usually of course the father. In addition, very large numbers of young Germans have come over as refugees from Eastern Germany without their parents. If one were to draw a parallel with British experience, one would have thought that such wholesale disruption of families should have produced a steep rise in delinquency, yet this has not happened. Western Germany has indeed been troubled by delinquency, but not more seriously than Britain, even rather less.

THE EXPLANATION, I think, lies in the enduring and highly authoritative structure of German bourgeois society. An astonishing aspect of

German post-war life has been the outward restoration of this bourgeois look. Travelling through Western Germany to-day, one might think that the past had never happened. It is not only a matter of the extraordinary physical re-building. The terrible instability of German society during the inter-war years—the inflation, the mass unemployment, Nazism, the officially encouraged rebellion of children against their parents, the disruptive teachings of Hitler and Goebbels—it might all never have been. Suddenly the old traditions of Germany all seemed to be back in force: the heavy authority of German superiors, officials, judges, and industrialists; of professors, teachers, and employers; of the German ideal of industrious apprenticeship and of punctual and efficient work; perhaps even, relatively speaking, the traditional authority of the German father over his family. As observers have remarked, there has been something almost unreal about this air of West German social tranquillity. It is a bourgeois restoration that goes with not thinking about Nazi days; it has almost brought back to Germany something of the spirit of the old bourgeois days before 1933, or even before 1914. But at any rate, until very recently, German youth seemed content to fall in with this restoration of authority.

The European Affluence

THE EXTRAORDINARY tenacity with which the historic values and hierarchies of bourgeois culture have been maintained, or restored, in countries like France, Italy, and Germany, despite the upheavals during the years of Fascism and war, is certainly an astonishing phenomenon. Yet this is only one side of the picture. There was also change in the air. True, it seemed to come peacefully. The innocent traveller in Europe some fifteen years after the war might well have received the superficial impression that an undisturbed continent had for generations known nothing except steady advance. Visually, it was an advance

* If it is dangerous to generalise too far about delinquent trends in one country, it is even more difficult to do so for a number of countries differing in historic background and in religious, cultural, and social outlook. Comparative statistics must be treated with caution. Legal definitions of what constitutes juvenile crime differ from country to country, as do definitions of the age of criminal responsibility. Figures tend to conceal demographic shifts and such changes as a tightening of police vigilance.

towards the life of an affluent society dominated by advertising and mass entertainments, cars and gadgets. As far as the young generation of Europe was concerned, it was an advance towards a youth culture reflecting that of America, a youth culture which went with the new pleasures of jive and rock, fancy clothes, the ownership of motor-cycles and scooters, and the espresso-bar life, and which was above everything international. On the level of highbrow jazz, one could walk into Humphrey Lyttelton's club in London, the Caveau de la Huchette in Paris, the Quartier du Jazz on the borders of West and East Berlin, or their Warsaw equivalents, and in each place find what seemed the same attractive-looking boys and girls, either dancing or else listening to the music with the same absorbed and serious attention. On the mass level, the popularity of James Dean in France was matched by that of Elvis Presley in West Germany, of Tommy Steele in Scandinavia, and Marlon Brando in Vienna.

All these were signs of far-reaching changes in European life. While the fabric of European bourgeois tradition had so surprisingly survived the war, the rising prosperity and the new techniques of the 'fifties were now initiating a social revolution. From *avant-garde* Sweden in the north to traditional Italy in the south, the basic trend was the same: the slow superimposition upon the old bourgeois class order of the less class-ridden and more fluid affluent society.

With this, as in Britain and the United States, went the economic emancipation of youth on a large scale, and with this, in turn, a spread of commercial youth culture—and a rise in the delinquency figures. This latter discovery was made in the late 'fifties in country after country; it was also increasingly realised that a section of youth felt discontented and ill at ease, that many boys and girls spent their leisure in utterly unconstructive ways, that they had nowhere to go, that something ought to be done. In fact, while bourgeois tradition had guided young people through the post-war tribulations of the 'forties, in the prosperous 'fifties it no longer looked adequate as a guide.

LOOKING AT the state of youth in Europe as a whole some fifteen years after the war, and generalising very broadly, two things could be said. First, the general picture of juvenile delinquency on the Continent resembled the picture in Britain, and could be linked in the same way to the pattern of social change.* If we take six

countries like, say, Britain, Federal Germany, Austria, Norway, France, and Italy, which were all involved in the war and for which roughly comparable statistics are available, the delinquency figures in all these countries fall into a broad pattern showing three quite strikingly marked phases.

The first phase was immediately after the war when juvenile crime and lawlessness went up in most parts of Europe. In view of the catastrophic effect of the war, this occasioned no surprise. On the contrary, as was mentioned earlier, in many places the increase was less than had been feared.

The next phase was that of European reconstruction. At the start of the 'fifties, economic expansion was already under way again in most parts of Europe, food and clothes rationing began to disappear and everyday life returned surprisingly quickly to normal. In keeping with this, delinquency figures also declined steadily from year to year, which again was what the experts expected.

It was the third phase of a renewed rise in delinquency which was as unforeseen by observers on the Continent as in Britain. It was in 1950 that the European economic resurgence began to get properly under way. It was half-way through the decade that, on the Continent as in Britain, economic recovery seemed suddenly to be causing changes in society itself—the direction being a greater or lesser shift from the classic European bourgeois society to the affluent society. The change went with the new pattern of mass consumption; car ownership, for instance, increased in Germany and France even faster than it did in Britain. Television arrived as the new classless entertainment. The new material prosperity drew more married women into work and brought higher pay for juveniles. European life, in fact, was becoming "Americanised." The mass media came in—in Germany a gigantic glossy-magazine industry was conjured up overnight. Intensive advertising arrived, even if not quite on an American or British scale; so did the new commercial youth culture, and so did a new wave of juvenile delinquency.

IN ALL THE SIX COUNTRIES, the middle of the decade appeared to be a turning-point when something happened as far as adolescents were concerned. The whole mood of youth changed;

** Juvenile Delinquency in Post-War Europe.*
Published by Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 1960).

new currents of discontent made themselves felt. The post-war decline in delinquency, which had gone with reconstruction, stopped and from about 1954–55, the figures began to go up again year by year. Nor was this increase linked with the surviving areas of European poverty and slum life, or exploited regions like Southern Italy, where boys (and girls, too) still took to crime in the struggle for survival. On the contrary, in every country, the new crime wave seemed to go with growing prosperity, with high wages, and apparent new discontents among youth. And a distinct pattern appeared to emerge. This was so striking that the Council of Europe called in 1959 for expert reports from member countries.

The cautious study which resulted from these reports* showed, for example, that in the years 1954–57 inclusive, industrial production in Western Germany went up by 30 per cent, unemployment fell 40 per cent—but juvenile offences against property rose by 50 per cent. During the same years in Austria, industrial production rose by 40 per cent, unemployment fell by 30 per cent, and property offences by juveniles rose by as much as 60 per cent. Much the same pattern was revealed in Britain and, with a time lag of two or three years, in France and the industrial north of Italy.

There were also changes in the nature of delinquency. More of the offences were carried out by relatively well-to-do and cynical youngsters. The report to the Council of Europe from Germany noted that the proportion of adolescents convicted for "offences against the person" had in the second half of the 'fifties gone up by over 50 per cent. Though the total was still small, an increase in sexual offences, including violent rape by bands of juveniles, was underlined. In Austria too (though here again it should be stressed that the absolute totals were small), sex offences by adolescents increased tenfold between 1946 and 1957. The report from Britain revealed similar trends; so did that from France, which spoke of "a diminution of thefts of a utilitarian character and an increase in gratuitous stealing in which the act of defiance against the social rules seems the most important element." Even in tranquil Norway, figures showed that juvenile convictions had more than doubled during the 'fifties.

Perhaps these figures should not be taken as more than straws in the wind. Still, the experience of countries like Germany, France, Austria, and Norway fits by and large into the same

pattern as does British experience. So, incidentally, does that of Sweden—indeed, the Swedish experience of unusually high delinquency falls very neatly into the picture. As a fortunate neutral, Sweden had escaped the losses and dislocations of the war. Starting off with a higher post-war standard of living, Sweden consequently advanced towards the pattern of the affluent society rather earlier than other European countries, both in terms of the benefits of this change and its disappointments. The figures of juvenile delinquency in Sweden certainly began to increase earlier than elsewhere. In fact, they have risen steadily year by year through the 'fifties.

The New Rebels

ANOTHER INDICATION that the increased delinquency of a minority reflected the wider unrest among European youth in the midst of accelerating social change has been the occasional mass outbreaks which disturbed public order in a number of countries. Characteristically, some of the largest of these riots reflecting youthful discontent have taken place in Sweden, the *avant-garde* country of the European affluent society. The Swedish report to the Council of Europe gave this picture:

Riots dominated by young people have occurred in Sweden, primarily in Stockholm, at regular intervals since the war. The most flagrant episode took place on the New Year's Eve of 1957, when approximately 3,000 individuals, about two-thirds of them under 21 years, collected in the centre of Stockholm. The demonstration was mainly aimed at the police. The policemen, many of them mounted, were bombarded with empty tin cans and other objects. The rioters attempted to frighten the horses with firecrackers. They wrenched off the doors of cars, which they forced to stop. One car was overturned and wrecked. The material damage was relatively insignificant, and there were no serious casualties. Of the rioters apprehended by the police, 63 were under 21 years. The antagonism of the crowd was clearly directed at the police, but the underlying cause is difficult to explain. Animosity towards the police has been expressed on other occasions in street riots in Stockholm. The situation appears to have improved during recent years, principally because the police are better prepared to deal with it, and partly because certain preventive measures have been introduced by the municipal authorities.

It is dangerous to generalise about such collective outbreaks, just as their motive force is

hard to explain, so it cannot be said that their incidence in various countries corresponded to any simple recognisable pattern. When I began my studies, the West German authorities were still upset about the *Halbstarkenkrawalle*, the riots of the "Half-Strong," which swept Germany in 1956–58, while the French authorities were confident that similar occurrences in France were impossible. A year or so later the German scene was quiet, while the gang activities of the French *blousons noirs*, the blackjackets, had put France definitely on to the delinquency map.

The German *Halbstarken* riots which from 1956 onwards broke out in city after city were a puzzling phenomenon. They looked like exhibitions of youthful anger and defiance that had no rhyme or reason. Thinking Germans, however, were still haunted by the memories of quite a different kind of violence a generation earlier, and, as a result, these new outbreaks caused considerable alarm and were studied and analysed in meticulous German detail. The studies showed, for example, that a starting-point of the epidemic was a much-publicised riot in Hanover in August, 1956. On the day before this riot, rumours were running through the city of an arranged battle between the adolescents of two different districts (as New Yorkers would say, a "rumble"), for which reinforcements were being mobilised on foot, mopeds, and motor-cycles. Even at this stage there was excited talk among the boys that if they were to be "attacked" by the highly unpopular police, they would certainly resist. In the event, the riot became much less of a fight between rival gangs than an hysterical attack upon public order. Groups of assembled youths rushed through the streets of Hanover, stopping traffic and molesting bystanders, smashing windows and hoardings, and finally stoning police-cars and struggling in apparent frenzy until an appropriate number were arrested and order was restored.

SPONTANEOUS AND DESTRUCTIVE disturbances of this type took place in 1956–58 in German cities as far apart as West Berlin, Munich, Düsseldorf, Bremen, Hamburg, etc. The evidence showed them to be much of a type. As a rule some hundreds of youths were involved in the rioting, dozens were arrested, and if casualties were not serious, damage to property was sometimes considerable. In some cases one could fix

on the starting-point of the excitement—a rock-and-roll occasion in Berlin, a recital by Louis Armstrong in Hamburg; in others, the hysteria, the smashing, and the resistance to the police seemed to arise without any apparent cause.

On the morning after (so the German records pointed out), neither the Courts nor the teenagers themselves seemed to know what it had been about. The reports also noted that the participants in the riots were predominantly working-class boys, many of them “provocatively dressed;” that there were few girls among them; that the sensational publicity given by the German press to one riot no doubt played its part in sparking off the next; that the youths turned up for the occasions with extraordinary home-made weapons and with a sense of emotional rancour against the police which puzzled the authorities, as did the cynical disregard of the rioters for public and personal property. In fact, the conclusion was that these *Halbstarken* riots were disturbing not so much in themselves as for the light they threw on the general increase in juvenile lawlessness and the apparent hostility of a section of German youth against any kind of public authority. What was particularly deplored was that two-thirds of this new generation of German teenagers no longer bothered to belong to any youth organisation. But just as public alarm became concentrated on these *Halbstarkenkrawalle*, they faded out again, as the British Teddy Boy riots had done. Like these, they left behind rising delinquency figures, but this was another matter.

IN FRANCE MEANWHILE, at about the same time, I was assured by a wise friend with considerable court experience that France was most unlikely to produce any counterpart to the *Halbstarken* or Teddy Boys. Not that French adolescents lacked resentments against adult society, but they appeared to have no impulse to translate these into organised action. On the contrary, the *malaise* of French youth lay in its apathy. In fact, in 1958, with the fading out of the Existentialists, France for the first time since the Revolution was without any Angry Young Men, whether on the intellectual level or otherwise; and my friend thought that the same applied to Italy.

That was in the autumn of 1958. The new young French rebels arrived less than a year later, and in most unexpected guise.

In July, 1959, at the start of what promised,

and turned out to be, a record Riviera season, a large gang of French youths armed with knives, sticks, buckled belts, and bicycle chains (on the Riviera!) staged a pretty savage and boisterous riot on the seafront near Cannes, destroying property, molesting startled campers, and stoning the police before scattering and vanishing again. To the alarm of the French “it-can’t-happen-here” school, similar wild riots followed in various places along the Riviera in quick succession. A culminating point was reached in a teenage fracas of quite notable dimensions when armed gangs of adolescent toughs from the port of Toulon converged on Bandol, many of them motorised, annoying holiday-makers and noisily fighting each other and the police, and even causing damage to a casino—this last act made international news.

The youths who staged these disorders called themselves by various mysterious code names, such as “*Les Gadjos*.” Because of their clothes, however, the public quickly christened them *Les Blousons Noirs* (the black leather was usually imitation). And for a few weeks *blousons noirs* incidents spread like a rash across France. Organised adolescent gangs under that label appeared suddenly in Paris. In August, one large gang staged a particularly frenzied disturbance right in the Rue Brillat-Savarin, where passers-by were injured, property damaged, and the boys tried to fight it out with the police. By contrast with similar British events, many of those arrested were middle-class boys. The Paris newspapers, which gave the disturbance dramatic coverage, reported that some highly respectable parents, on arriving at the police station, could hardly believe their eyes to find their sons under arrest.

By that time, *blousons noirs* incidents had become international news, often accompanied by photographs of French policemen vigorously swinging batons. With the biggest tourist traffic in Europe to guard, the French police, as could be expected, reacted with characteristic vigour. A disturbance in the Paris suburb of Drancy led to no less than a hundred arrests. In September the Paris Prefect of Police announced that six large gangs of *blousons noirs* were operating in Paris, but that already over eight hundred juveniles had been picked up for questioning. A further sign of public alarm was a series of prominently featured articles in a newspaper like *Le Monde*, with such headings as “IT IS URGENT TO ORGANISE THE WELFARE OF OUR MORALLY ENDANGERED YOUTH” and demanding the pro-

vision of more youth clubs and youth leaders. As it turned out, however, with the end of the glorious summer holiday of 1959, the *blousons noirs* seemed to have vanished as mysteriously as they had emerged. They made a much-publicised fresh appearance in the spring of 1960—French belief in immunity from such “Anglo-Saxon” troubles as youth riots had certainly been shaken.

ITALY ALSO, interestingly enough, experienced a relative flare-up of youthful lawlessness during the summer of 1959. By comparison with some other countries, this did not amount to very much. There were a few incidents of the Teddy Boy-type in industrial cities like Milan and Turin, but on a minor scale. Still, perhaps as a variant from its preoccupation with continuous high society scandals, the Italian press for a time featured almost daily stories of fights and stabbings by young hooligans. One incident above all, in which a peasant girl from Bracciano stabbed to death one of a gang of seven boys who attacked her, had all the right ingredients for nation-wide publicity. It featured not only a youthful gang and an attempted sex crime, but showed virtue triumphant. At any rate, the reaction of the Italian authorities was quick and emotional. In August, the then Prime Minister, Signor Segni, requested the Italian police to proceed with utmost severity against youthful gangsters. (The Italian police, with a tradition of acting against political street demonstrations and a scope their British colleagues would envy, did in fact not hesitate. In a single *razzia* in Milan, for instance, five hundred youths were picked up for questioning, many being detained.)

A rather absurd Bill put to Parliament to deprive “socially dangerous and exhibitionist young offenders” of the right temporarily to practise their profession did not go far, but indicated the way some sections of Italian opinion were thinking. So did newspaper articles attacking the evil of pin-table machines (whose import was prohibited) and other foreign influences allegedly destructive of Italian morals. This Italian wave of alarm, too, seemed to fade with the summer, and the press turned its attention back to other topics such as, once again, scandals in high society. Still, it had been shown that Italy, like France, was also no longer quite immune to the new mood of defiance and delinquency of a sub-section of European youth.

The End of the Line

NOR EVEN was stolid Switzerland. Teddy Boys, or their equivalent, a friend told me, were even to be found in so clean, prosperous, and satisfied a city as Zurich. They were Swiss youths of “a new type,” he said, “who rejected the Swiss tradition of the good apprentice, who refused to learn a trade, worshipped the noise and speed of motor-cycles, hung around juke-box bars and pin-table saloons, imitated American mannerisms learned from films, and got themselves into trouble,” who were in fact, Swiss Teds.

I found this hard to believe, for as a visitor in Zurich I was back at a familiar starting-point. Through the accidents of the travels of my parents, Zurich had been my first home town, the background scenery of my early school years, and on recent visits this background had looked to me uncannily unchanged. That brooding sense of repression imposed on Swiss youth by parents, teachers, and the police, the spirit of cantonal narrowness which went together with the fierce sense of Swiss independence—they seemed as oppressive as ever. Here among the clean asphalt streets of Zurich and the villas which since my time had spread right round the lake, I still felt that bourgeois life had not crumbled, only grown a little stale.

However, following instructions, I walked in the evening along Zurich's street of entertainment, the Niederdorferstrasse, where the strains of alternatively New Orleans jazz and Tin Pan Alley output seemed to flow incongruously from stolid Swiss bars. At a pin-table saloon I drew a blank. The brand-new establishment was brightly lit, shining with Swiss cleanliness; over its rows of polished pin-tables stood Swiss youths, all wearing elegant plastic raincoats and playing the tables gravely and in complete silence...

But at the appropriate corner further along the street I found my quarry; youths standing about in large groups, sporting the usual tight trousers, fancy waistcoats, and wild shocks of hair above their honest, well-scrubbed Swiss peasant faces. They were standing about, leaning against walls and lamp-posts, waiting, it was hard to imagine for what; but as they saw that I was observing them, they glared back at me with undisguised hostile challenge. They reminded me of a group of similarly-attired youths I had met only a few days earlier in Communist East Berlin...

Yet something was not quite right in the picture. Perhaps because I had been a Zurich schoolboy myself, I knew they were not quite the genuine article. Probably they had merely heard or read something of a revolt of youth supposed to be going on elsewhere, and in their adolescent discontent they wanted to join in without quite knowing what to join or how to go about it. And no doubt, something was going on, some sort of revolution in the life of youth was in progress in Europe; only this little group of would-be Teds in Zurich were not the only ones who found it difficult to know where it led to.

IF ANYWHERE IN EUROPE one can feel that history has been as if wiped out with a sponge, it is in Austria. Between the wars, Austria was a seething cauldron of ideological conflict. Social-Democratic Vienna saw civil war, dictatorship, Nazism and war and the vengeful Red Army. In the upshot, by a transformation scene, the Viennese at the end of the 'fifties found themselves citizens of a country in which they had never had it so good but which had evidently opted out of history.

Perhaps for this reason, constant attention was given in the press to the misdeeds of the obstreperous Austrian *Halbstarcken* as reflecting a *malaise* not merely of youth but Austrian youth in particular. They were indeed quite conspicuous in Vienna. Groups of such dressed-up young rebels—the challenging uniform at the time of my visit was black leather or imitation leather jackets, tight trousers, and two-toned Milanese shoes—could be met on Saturday or Sunday evenings as they stood about in gangs outside certain cinemas in poses designed to resemble those of Marlon Brando, or mystified their elders by using their mopeds and motorcycles not to reach the country but to drive noisily and endlessly up and down certain streets. And they, too, carried out their antics against a background of rising criminality figures. Perhaps these were not as serious as Viennese newspapers made out, but somehow the outlook of this section of Austrian youth appeared to be changing in a direction which worried not only the press but also the Viennese Socialists (who controlled the municipality), and especially the psychologists and social workers among them.

They were worried, as was admitted in conversation, because against the exciting attraction of high earnings, juke-box culture, the glamour

of American films and the motorised life, the special tradition of Viennese socialism and socialist youth organisations no longer carried weight. I was told that some of the *Halbstarcken* carrying flick-knives were the sons of active socialist and trade unionist parents living in the famous municipal apartment blocks. It was a sign of the times that to get teenagers off the streets the socialist municipality of Vienna had opened several jazz and jive clubs, with picturesque names like "*The Black Panther*," or (in English) "*Hot Club*."

Probably because Social Democratic Vienna had between the wars played such a leading part in laying down new municipal standards in workers' co-operative housing, in social welfare and especially juvenile welfare, I found particularly my younger socialist acquaintances emphatic in the opinion that, valuable as these achievements were, they were no longer sufficient, not for the rich, more demanding, and bewildered teenagers of the new society. For these, quite new thinking and town planning was required. An article in the daily *Arbeiterzeitung* criticised the rebuilding of Vienna as having been on wholly wrong lines in not anticipating teenage needs. In the new blocks of standardised labour-saving flats, adolescents had no places of their own where they could relax, play records, make a noise, nor even cellars or attics for this purpose: they were virtually forced out into the streets. Nor could they find meeting-places there. To a Londoner all this sounded vaguely familiar. The article was accompanied by a map of Vienna with black spots marking the meeting-places of street-corner gangs, and declared that each such area needed a youth centre or youth club. . . .

IN A SIMILAR conversation in Paris with French youth experts, the emphasis was on somewhat different lines. They insisted that, with regard to young offenders, French penal methods compared favourably with those of other countries. They also seemed all to agree that the rising rate of juvenile criminality in France was connected with new social trends. When I made the point that the tenacious bourgeois traditions of France had up to recent years resulted in a stable, if repressed, life among French adolescents, they also agreed, but with a sense almost of grievance they refuted the charge that the French political, economic, and social structure was still out of date and did not fit into the modern world. Through the uninter-

rupted industrial expansion of the 'fifties, France, they said, had been catching up rapidly, but, as elsewhere, this change had also brought new social disruption, especially in the case of French youths.

French boys and girls were now far less oppressed by that ubiquitous and censorious demand for social conformity which had been so strong in French village or small-town life: instead they faced the danger of big-city anonymity. The new advance of industrialisation was also at last breaking up the traditional, almost clan-like unit of the extended French family, which used to include grandparents, uncles and aunts and remote cousins. Instead, industrialisation was producing a new pattern—new in France—of a small isolated family of parents and children only. Especially where both parents were working, this new family, *la famille réduite*, so it was said, offered teenagers an inadequate basis of personal security. Others blamed the unrest on the insidious skill of modern mass advertising, which is more of an innovation in France than in Britain or the United States. This new kind of advertising, they thought, caused unrest by dangling delights before the eyes of boys and girls who could not afford them, and therefore felt permanently discontented and deprived.

Others again pointed to the peculiar difficulties which French life presented for the group activities of youth. By comparison with many other countries, France was deficient in facilities for sports clubs and social clubs. French schools did little in this respect. Investigations in a number of industrial cities had revealed that an alarmingly large proportion of teenagers no longer spent much time at home, but did not know what to do with their leisure, hanging about aimlessly, evening after evening, in courtyards, streets, and cafés. Not so much the revolt of the few, like the *blousons noirs*, but the apathy of the many was the youth problem which was gradually forcing itself on French public attention and which had to be remedied.

THE NEW YOUTH PROBLEM has already been made the subject of a series of German studies. Post-war Western Germany, to be sure, has been a country full of surprises. The "economic miracle" has been only one of them in the new republic. Within ten years, as Sebastian Haffner wrote in retrospect in 1960,

it has settled down as an extremely orderly, liberal, humane, and almost pedantically law-

abiding State with completely unquestioned smoothly-working democratic institutions; it has no real totalitarian opposition either on the Left or on the Right, but only two lunatic fringes. If anything, it is a little philistine, a little Swiss, a little too good to be true.

There were other German observers who felt it was too good to be true and looked on the *Halbstarken* riots as a warning signal. One such warning came from Hamburg. This was a study called *Juveniles Disturb Public Order*, written by Professor Curt Bondy and three collaborators from Hamburg University, and to my mind one of the most enlightening brief analyses of the troubles of youth in the affluent society.

Just as the main social developments in Western Germany and Britain during the 'fifties were more alike than generally realised, so Professor Bondy's attempted definition of the *Halbstarken* could equally be applied to the Teddy Boys. "Under the term *Halbstarken* we understand male adolescents who move about in larger or smaller groups, who like to dress provocatively and find their main interest in an irresponsible and unconstructive association with others of their age and sex." Going on to discuss the defects of which the *Halbstarken* were accused, such as disregard for other people's property, reckless living for the moment, paucity of experience and emotional superficiality, a lack of basic principles and of a sense of responsibility, Professor Bondy observed gently that all but the first of these failings could be attributed to adolescents in general. The *Halbstarken* only displayed them in more extreme, even hysterical form. Yet this was the significant point. If German society had always had its *Halbstarken*, never before had hundreds of teenagers who hardly knew each other been in the habit of gathering in an excited mood to stage mass riots. If one added the rise in the delinquency rate, this argued that, under the gloss of German prosperity, new social trends were at work which needed watching.

Professor Bondy cautiously enumerated some of these as they affected mainly working-class youth. There was what he called the acceleration of physical maturity. The German teenagers of the 'fifties were taller than their predecessors and tended to look older than they really were. Partly as a result of this, they were too early in their lives put to work rather as though they were already adults. While their working day often brought them high earnings, it often also provided few satisfying personal contacts and

little or no scope for the sort of spontaneity which adolescents needed in order to express themselves: they therefore tended to look for it in sensationalism and gang life in their leisure time. Parallel with this went changes in family life. Professor Bondy noted that even in Germany, paternal authority was at last on the decline. In many German post-war families there was no father, and the mother had to play the role of both parents. But this was only part of the problem. A new pattern of family life was developing, where the mother, like the teenagers, worked chiefly "to keep pace with the increasing material demands of civilisation," and in which many a father tended to become little more than a "discontented lodger." Lack of firm guidance in such families meant that boys and girls were forced far too early into a life of financial and personal independence.

Some other factors which made for discontent were those which also applied to the British situation. In the re-building of German post-war society, and especially in the actual physical re-building of cities, too little consideration had been given to the greater demands of the new generation of adolescents and the greater demands society put on them; for lack of amenities and places where they could meet, too many youngsters were forced into the streets. There was the noticeable decline of traditional morality. Many of the young rejected religious and civic teaching as mere phrases: it was significant that the majority belonged to no youth organisation. Lastly, there was the growth—very swift in Germany—of new commercial mass entertainment, much of it in American style. Though its directly harmful effects might be exaggerated, it failed to fill the gaps left by the decline in traditional standards; it provided entertainment but no guidance.

HOW SERIOUS was this youth problem on the Continent? The answer, I think, lies in understanding how it developed. Western Europe weathered the disturbed post-war years with far less trouble from the young than was expected. During this phase of recovery, the tradition of European bourgeois society revealed a surprising strength. By contrast, it is the changes of more recent years, all leading in the direction of a new European affluent society, which have brought an increase in juvenile crime and gang life which has led to cries of alarm.

Still, as a generalisation it could be said that

the problem of juvenile delinquency loomed less large in Continental Western Europe than in Britain and certainly much less large than in the United States. Here it is worth reiterating what, to my mind, is the reason for this difference. Even in those parts of the Continent where life outwardly seems dominated as much as it is to-day in Britain by such things as mass media, by cars, gadgets, blatant advertising, and other attributes of the affluent society, the traditional bourgeois standards, even if they no longer have their old influence, are nevertheless still preserved more strongly than in Britain. Especially in countries like France and Italy, the majority of the population has not yet been as much drawn away from these standards towards the new mass culture projected by the advertisers as is the case in this country—and even more in the United States.

Yet it is also evident that this contrast derives less from present circumstances than from the traditions of a receding European past, and this prompts some general conclusions.

As far as the young of to-day are concerned, their widened opportunities in this new age are obvious. But as I have tried to suggest, the onset of the affluent society has also brought other social changes in its train. It has begun suddenly to weaken the traditions of bourgeois society. It has transformed and loosened family relationships. Impelled towards independence at a much earlier age, the adolescents of to-day are exposed to an influence quite new in scale in the shape of the commercial youth culture. It was the starting-point of my argument that the post-war wave of juvenile delinquency should be seen as a sign of the strains of this revolution in the life of youth—and of new problems for society. How intensively should we educate our youth (I am here referring not to any élite but to the mass of the ordinary young who are stepping into the affluent society)? How deliberately should we watch and guide their social life and protect them against the destructive influences of our time? These are questions which, I feel, are still unsolved in the advanced countries of the West (and, in their way, in the Soviet Union).

They are, of course, already being discussed—or they have begun to be discussed. In Britain, for example, the Crowther and Albemarle reports represent some quite far-reaching new thinking on the subject. There are the proposals for drastically extending school attendance and part-time education for the mass of too early

school-leavers. There are the arguments for doing this not only to give them better training, but quite explicitly to keep them until a later age out of the racket of the commercial youth culture. As is also argued, if we are going to live in a new, anonymous sort of landscape of blocks of flats and sprawling suburban estates, of arterial roads and television aerials everywhere, a landscape in which adolescents can find little emotional attachment, then there is all the more need to provide them with effectively organised youth centres and youth clubs on quite a new scale.

Set against the social and scientific revolution of our time, such current proposals for educational reform may not look very imposing.

Yet about the need for such reform there is this to be said: if we have to accept that the affluent society is with us as inevitably as is the nuclear age, the first task surely is to try to enable the young generation to cope better with the difficulties of this society than many of them can do now. And this task of devising a better framework of educational and social discipline

for the young is also important because the new society does not look as stable as its advertisers make out—the young rebels have a point here. As the authors of the Albemarle Report said (the reference is to Britain, but the implications are wider):

To-day's adolescents live within a world sharply divided into two immense blocks of power; and a world under constant threat of nuclear catastrophe. In addition, their own country's power and international status, once so great and indisputable, are now less easily assured. These issues may only be made articulate by a few. We are persuaded, nevertheless, that they are felt to lie immediately behind the small stage of many an adolescent's activities, like a massive and belittling backcloth.

It is the young of to-day who face these complications. There may not be much we can do about the "belittling backcloth." But since it is essential for the young to feel that the future belongs to them, there is every reason to help by providing them in their immediate lives with a greater sense of order.

Here and There

Here and there, by and by,
Some of us like to die
Without dishonour, gravely.

Our ghostly comforter
Comes and goes, ghostlier
Than you who discomfit her.

If I say "dead" to you,
Dreamless in bed with you,
Can true-death or love be true?

And if I dream you near?
I would not love you, dear,
If we died there, and not here.

Robert Nye

Now that we're alone we can talk Prince man to man
though you lie on the stairs and see no more than a dead ant
nothing but black sun with broken rays
I could never think of your hands without smiling
and now when they lie on the stone like fallen nests
they are defenceless as before The end is exactly this
The hands lies apart The sword lies apart The head apart
and the knight's feet in soft slippers

You will have a soldier's funeral without having been a soldier
the only ritual I am acquainted with a little
There will be no candles no singing only cannon-fuses and bursts
Crape dragged on the pavement helmets boots artillery horses
drums I know nothing exquisite
those will be my manoeuvres before I start to rule
one has to take the city by the neck and shake it a bit

Anyway you had to perish Hamlet you were not for life
you believed in crystal notions not in human clay
Always in a spasm asleep you hunted chimeras
woolfishly you crunched the air only to vomit
you knew no human thing you did not know even how to breathe

Now you have peace Hamlet you accomplished what you had to
and you have peace The rest is not silence but belongs to me
you chose the easier part an elegant thrust
But what is heroic death compared to eternal watching
with a cold apple in one's hand on a narrow chair
with a view on the ant-hill and the clock's dial

Adieu Prince I have tasks a sewer project
and a decree on prostitutes and beggars
I must also elaborate a better system of prisons
since as you justly said Denmark is a prison
I go to my own affairs This night was born
a star named Hamlet We shall never meet
what I will leave will not deserve tragedy
It is not for us to greet each other not bid farewell
and that water these words what can they do What can they do Prince

Translator's Note

Zbigniew Herbert belongs to that generation of young Polish poets who started to publish around 1956. Together with Miron Białoszewski (see ENCOUNTER, February, 1958), Jerzy Harasymowicz and Stanisław Grochowiak, he is considered one of the leaders of the "new wave." He lives in Warsaw.

CZESŁAW MIŁOŻ

Fragments

I was born before my time. When my time came, the place was occupied by someone else; all the good things of life for which I was now fit had suddenly become unfit. It was always too early or too late. Too early to behave like a grown boy and run ahead of the governess who wheeled my younger brother through the park in his blue carriage, too late to sit in that carriage looking like Queen Victoria and getting all the attention. Too early to have collected in my body at birth the soul of my grandmother, too late to have known her and be able to mourn her. Too early to be given injections of longevity which would be invented in the year two thousand with television and space travel, too late to have known the grand life of the Gay Nineties, with gas lamps, horse-drawn carriages, and private railroad cars. Too early to be treated with deference, too late to be treated with tenderness. Too early to be brought up in freedom, too late *not* to be brought up in freedom. My education was a very strict one, yet it could no longer be the strict Victorian, Prussian, militaristic education my mother had received, or the strict Jesuit education my father had received. So I can really claim that I was brought up in revolt against those rules, but the revolt came only from my parents, who then wielded those rules, pretending they were lenient while they were only talking.

My earliest ideals were all extremely worthy but somewhat contradictory: to be able to cry (proof of a tender heart), to be able not to cry (proof of a manly heart), to be forever grateful to my parents for benefits received (proof of humility), to remember forever what I owed to myself (proof of independence), to leave mother alone (proof of respect for other people's independence), not to leave her alone (proof of respect for other people's feelings). How could, in fact, a mother make herself independent if

she must always fear for the safety of her children? They never clashed by accident, those worthy ideals: they came in two and ran on the same track in opposite directions. If I kept them both in sight, having placed all of myself into both engines, I could only watch them clash. If I kept only one in sight (the tender heart or the strong character), my soul fled from the other and was lost to the love and esteem of my parents.

"Extremist!" they would say, "no sense of proportion." To keep their love, their esteem, and my proportion, I had the choice to either run against myself, or stay solidly rooted in mid-air and refuse to go anywhere by any train. As an obedient son I ran against myself and refused to go anywhere, staying solidly rooted in mid-air.

I was born a good child. Had I lost both my parents at the age of three or four, six at the most, I might still have become a good man. The trouble was I lost them when they had already lost me. And yet I am devoted to their memory. They tried their best...but perhaps not, because they did their worst. I refuse to believe that their best was of such a low quality. This would be like accusing them of inhumanity or stupidity. Other interests kept them captive: here is a far more charitable view. They were caught unawares by their anatomy. They were fit to have children, not to tend them. In other words, they were like everybody else, who casts upon his children some of the evil left unused by his parents on the day of their death. Hell is this side of life. The dead are punished over here for all their sins. No need of devils with their forks and flames. Our children are the devils, filial love is their instrument of torture. Oh, how the dead must suffer when they see their nonsense triumph! Two are the disadvantages of death: we are either forgotten or

remembered. If the Hereafter clarifies our thoughts (and they are too confused to be stored in eternity that way), if our minds at least emerge in a better condition than our bodies, then the dead must begin to understand, they must open their eyes the very moment we are closing them on their sad faces, and they must watch the scene, not from "up high," but from any point lower than the ceiling. They must begin to haunt us in full daylight, when ghosts are never feared and inner voices never heard, and they must cry and plead: "Forget us, oh, don't honour us, it hurts too much." To no avail.

MY FATHER was a doctor and descended from a dish on which his face (half lion and half satyr) could be seen all in red with a wide open mouth and two fiery eyes, flowers and naked women coming out of his skull, two cornucopias coming out of his ears, two cleft feet (obviously his own) on the two sides of his beard, and two identical sets of musical instruments (flutes, long trumpets, mandolins, and bagpipes) tied to the ends of his long, red moustache and plunged into an oval night all to themselves (they were painted on black). But ever since he had begun to study medicine, he had (as he said) "pulled all the nonsense out of my head" and closed his skull, letting black hair grow over it. The cornucopias had been replaced with just one stethoscope which he kept in his pocket and used only to hear the answers of the microbes to his patients' coughing and counting. His skin had become pink with shades of yellow, and he kept his mouth shut or opened it only to talk and eat and pick his teeth with a gold toothpick in the form of a sword he used only when my mother was not watching. I never knew what had become of the musical instruments until one day I noticed them in a dark library in the house of an old gentleman who had become our friend, or rather our clown: the Marchese Carlo Tempi of Rome, whose English-Russian wife was more or less a friend of ours and whose father-in-law, a Mr. Schultz from Petersburg, was really our friend and also, in a way, our broker. But not all of the musical instruments were there: the bagpipes and the trumpets were missing, and the black oval night was also gone. The only person who could know anything about them was obviously my father, and so the truth came out. His disclaimed all descendance from those dishes: they were older than he, and besides, they were

English and he came from a small town called Laterza in the province of Lecce in Southern Italy.

In nineteen-thirteen my father invented Diphtheria. I discovered this fact by listening behind the living-room door whilst he was talking to another doctor. I could not understand what need there was to invent another disease, when there were so many already, but whatever he did was wise and good. He also invented on that same day the Italian word "*insomma*" which I had never heard before. He seemed to enjoy using it, but as the word was new, he tried it on to see how it would fit, and every time he did so there was a long, medical silence (the silence of injections, of pulse-taking, of chart readings, in which silence a doctor waits for results); then they resumed their conversation. After another while, again my father used that word and again there was a silence. I decided I would use it myself, and tried it with the maid in the kitchen shouting "*Insomma!*" Strangely enough she knew it already, and yet my father had not moved from the living-room.

I ran back to my listening-post, and heard that Pope Pius X had just died. I wondered whether Diphtheria had been tried on him while I was in the kitchen, and was curious to know how my father could have done it all so quickly. Then I heard that the Campanile of Venice had just fallen (nothing to do with Diphtheria, but all the same, how many things in such a short time). "*Insomma*" said my father, and the other doctor approved, then said he had to go, and I was sure he was going to spread Diphtheria all over the town. "*Insomma*" said the doctor before leaving, and my father wished him good luck.

Then there was a dispute between me and my sister. She said that before being born I had been dead for centuries and no one had ever noticed it. So I ran to my father and asked him.

"You never were," he said. "You were just born five years ago, and you will not die for another ninety-five years, I hope."

"Yes, but *before* I was born."

"You were unborn."

"Unborn and not dead?"

"Yes, you must be born to die."

I did not press the matter any further. I understood it as an order. You could not sit at table without washing your hands, so you were not allowed to die unless you were born. But in some remote countries, I thought, a boy could

disobey his parents and die first. The idea seemed absurd, but fascinating all the same, if for no other reason, as a fantastic form of disobedience.

And so we spoke about a great many things, all a bit delicate, because they all converged upon the only point of interest which was also the only one that could never be mentioned, namely, death. A doctor was immune to disease, therefore a doctor could not die, but there was nothing reassuring about this. Such concepts as eternity or immortality are apprehended only by exemplification. A few inches of infinity in a painting are all we know of real infinity. Thirty or forty years of life seen from the heights of my five years of age were such a proof of immortality that one could even die if one had lived so long. In fact, my father spoke about death as a good thing, and, besides, he was *dirty with time*, the marks of death could not be washed out of his skin. His neck was full of irregular lines, and I asked myself why they should not have been made more calligraphic and parallel. He was beginning to have a double chin, a face within a face, or rather a new face behind a face, and the loose flesh under his chin swelled like a curtain in the wind, and the back of his hands was shiny and brown with irregular spots (the dirt of time again), when they hung low the veins came out in knots ready to blast, and when he fell asleep after a meal breathing through his open mouth, he was rehearsing for his death.

Looking now at a picture of my parents taken after the invention of Diphtheria (my father was then forty-three, my mother thirty-five), they looked like adolescents: not a wrinkle in their faces, not a shade of awareness in their eyes. But children are astronomers: they calculate the arrival of a comet long before it becomes visible, the decay of their parents is measured on their own freshness; that wrinkle that will scar their mother's mirror in ten years like a sudden bad omen, has been their first toy when she was young. The only guarantee that our parents were not going to die came to us from the fact that they could still give orders. Such phrases as: "You heard me!—What are you waiting for?—Do you want to be spanked?"—chased away every doubts as to their nearing death. They must have known they were still safe and strong. When instead they lost interest in our crimes and let us be without trying to discover whether their orders had been duly carried out, we felt in this a loss of interest in the world, and the nearness of death. We never knew which

of these two fears was preferable: the fear of violence or the fear of freedom.

I DID not learn much about death that day. I still saw it as a low entrance to a cavern: people going that way must slowly bend in order not to bump their heads against the ceiling as they entered, and in spite of his age my father was still walking straight, thank God. But I learned a great deal about that past in which the world was forced to do without me. There had been, long before I was born, those earlier gods who rise beyond the great oceans of tears offered by descendants to forefathers. There they stand like tall mountains baking in distant sunshine, often hidden in mist, and we here, sunk in mire to our chin, we who have never used our legs to walk, are proud that we have come down from such heights. On my father's side I see shadows of peasants bent under olive trees, hardly distinguishable from the soil. Their actions are agricultural and seasonal more than moral or personal. Their anonymity, their silence, makes me feel that down there in Apulia I descended from olive trees, fig trees, and almond trees, also from oxen, goats, and donkeys, and no longer from dishes. That was a world of passivists, the real victims of God. A world of mourners, too. History: a come-down from the golden age; hope: a crime; health: a form of treason; eating well: a defiance or a lesson to those who believed they could starve you; money: a constant cause of bereavement, while earning it, while keeping it, while spending it; the presence of the rich: like the presence of God, you kneel in front of them, you beat your chest, you cry because you know they are too powerful to be also human. But while your head is in the dust, your eyes are on their feet, and your feet on the go.

On my mother's side instead, I see fir trees crashing noisily under the axe, uncombing other fir trees in the forest, I see lumber yards, industrial villages and smoke from factories, compasses, ledger books and shelves, binoculars and beards, bales and boxes on quaysides, gold-rimmed spectacles and banks, offices on black beaches with green seas and icebergs, offices on white beaches with blue seas and pyramids, and, at the centre of it all, a quiet house with heavy curtains in a quiet street of Moscow. This was a world of activists with a religion of their own, even a trinity of their own, an Iron Will, a Sense of Duty to Mankind, and a Gigantic Self-

Respect. Money in that world counted for nothing, or much rather, it counted, to become sinful afterwards, was therefore treated with caution and contempt. It had the same function as mercury in the thermometer: it measured effort, worthiness, therefore honesty, too. Left to itself outside the glass tube, it could never be mastered, it would break into smaller infinities which no finger could grab.

Closer to us in time: the later gods, known also as the dead, who do emerge (if at all) from the ocean of tears. The last dead in our family were all in the respectable but somewhat distant category of grandparents, far beyond reach of tears for us children, who had either not known them, or could hardly remember them. My Italian grandparents were no gods. They were human and buried. They had died at the same time or almost, and soon after the funeral my father had to go back to medical school and obtain his degree, then come back home and look after his seven sisters and whatever was left of his estate. His dreams of academic work, teaching medicine as a form of philosophical discipline, were set aside, and he became a country doctor. That is why, if he spoke of his parents at all, it was with reverence but without grief, and without mentioning their exceptional virtues or the wrongs they had suffered. They were gone from his memory like the smell of burnt candles and warm flowers, incense and disinfectant from the room of the dead after the funeral.

We had only one picture of them in the house, a two-seater picture: my grandfather, with whiskers that swelled his fat face considerably, seemed to emerge from the fog, as my father had done one rainy day, peeping into a tea-room to see whether we were still seated there drinking our hot chocolate. His face had emerged suddenly from the fog blanketing the crystal, we had seen him talk to us and we had talked to him, but he could neither hear us nor answer us. Of my grandmother I knew only that she had never had her picture taken in her lifetime, because her husband would have considered this a form of treason. In fact, in that one picture there she was already dead, and there was more fog around her than around him. Her head, half-hidden in white lace and sunken into a pillow, the white of her eyes showing, and her teeth showing: she seemed almost a skull. And yet those two asked nothing of us. They did not even want to know what we were doing when no one was looking at us. They did not even use

their star to blink at us when we had told a lie. No death current if we touched them. Also my Russian grandfather was surprisingly harmless and contented with his old ration of tears. He had died when my mother was eleven, she had cried for a day then left him for a teddy-bear we still have in the house, but even this toy, though more sacred than any of my grandfather's portraits and even his marble bust, had a much smaller charge of sacredness than any of my grandmother's toys. There was a tragic reason for this fact.

WHEN I opened my eyes on the world, the corpse of my grandmother was still rotting about the house.

The suffocating smells were neutralised with essences: sandalwood, smoked silver, camphor oil, face powders, moth balls, jasmine, Russian leather, Chinese tea, Japanese lacquer, candied roses, burnt paper, incense, even boxes of un-smoked ancient cigars. But the smell of decay was stronger than all these. We had it in our cribs, we had it in our toys, we had it in our food, so we began to putrefy before we were allowed to grow. There was not a clean handkerchief, not a clean bedsheet, napkin, tablecloth or towel in the house, not a fork, not a knife, not a cup or a saucer, not a sheet of writing-paper, not a book, that was not marked with her initials and cursed with her organic fall from that title of possession. Walls were stained with her images, in brown on brown, in black on white, in oil, in tempera, in pastel, in miniature, always with that sad look demanding grief and worthiness, all examples to follow taken from sacred moments of her life: here she was standing in a personal pyramid of sealskin, topped by three layers of pearls, the protruding double chin, plus bulging cheeks, high cheekbones, frowning forehead, hair, and a small sealskin baby bonnet tied under her chin with ribbons (all of which items became symbols of virtue); there she came in a bust of white marble ("Be as pure as this marble" was the unspoken dictate to be read in that bust); further down under glass and in a heavy gilded frame with oak leaves and ribbons, two of her chins almost buried in sable, she seemed to imply that one must be as finely drawn and painted as that sable (and whoever was sableless was wrong); in the adjoining room, in a large photograph, she sat hugely in white lace under a lace umbrella in her victoria, against the glaring background of hotels, palm trees, and balconies; then she

came all in black, seated in a low sleigh with black horses, black fir trees and snow for a background; then, in another picture, she was seated alone at the head of a large banquet table, with a window behind her, so all one saw was a white tablecloth with dishes, glasses of all sizes, bottles, carafes, and flowers, tending toward that dark shape of a goddess who did not seem at all tamed by those tributes. But her photographers went on trying their best to drag a smile out of that mass of international proteins. They took pictures of her on elephants in India, on camel back in Egypt, on the Pyramids, inside the Pyramids, under the Sphinx, amid the ruins of Pompeii (she did smile in that one as if to imply "See what I do to cities when they make me angry?"), and from each of those images there came a stream of sadness strong enough to ruin the most normal of children, let alone one like me who was already ruined by the mere fact of descending from her.

The only picture in the house which seemed somewhat reassuring was that of her rich tomb in Berlin. She of course was not to be seen in it, a grave-stone held her safely down, and a huge marble block with an overfed angel sitting on it had been added to the weight just in case. I, in my evil mind, saw her all wormy and frothing with cadaveric soap and still not smiling, but a look at that angel made me forget these shameful images at once. But when I learned that she was not under that stone, I was quite disappointed. That was only the picture of her former future tomb; it had been taken after her husband had been buried there, in fact, his name carried the dates of birth and death, and hers, carved under his, only the date of her birth. That God might follow me through a thousand walls was bad enough, but then He was the Great, Merciful One. He forgave everything, and I was not his relative. I was just one out of billions of children from all races and countries, and to follow them all required time even for Him, while the same omnipresence in the hands of a person like my grandmother who had no use for anyone outside the strict family circle and who never forgave a son of forty if he smoked in her presence or got married in her absence, was a real danger. No one had yet explained to me that the mere fact of existing put me in the number of those who had crucified the Lord, and for this reason I felt innocent when I compared myself to a Jew. I was already suffering from a strong Pilate complex; I was washing my hands of the whole business. The

case of my grandmother instead seemed more serious. She had suffered more than Christ, because not one of those who had exploited her and cheated her had ever repented in public or had built a single church to better repent in it, while the churches of Christ could not be counted. Yet she had always given without asking for anything but gratitude. She had given more generously than it was customary even in Moscow. And though people are known to be bad, and nothing may be expected of them, grandchildren are not just people, and my grandmother had the right to expect the best of me as a bare minimum. That is why she blinked at me all the time from her personal star, when I passed in front of her portrait having just told a lie.

"Did you brush your teeth?" my mother asked me.

"Yes, I did."

"Can you swear?"

"Yes, I can."

"On your grandmother's grave?"

"No."

"Then you don't swear, you just simply confess that you have told me a lie. And last night too, and so the night before, you always swore and you always knew these were lies, therefore you have two oaths, a false one and a solid one taken on your grandmother's grave, but can you really believe that your grandmother doesn't know these things? Do you realise that every time you tell a lie you are spitting on her grave? How many times have you been spitting on her grave lately?"

Now this was very confusing. At times I had brushed my teeth, at times I had only brushed the corner of the bathroom shelf with my toothbrush. Could I, with so many lies on my conscience already, volunteer to put under that heading also the rare occasions when I had told the truth? She kept insisting she wanted to know the exact number of lies I had told her. And as the choice was up to me, I first went through the comedy of a great deal of mind-searching and soul-searching, and then chose to have told her the smallest possible number of lies in order to save my soul from a new crime: that of killing my mother. At the same time I realised that it was much too late for me to recapture my soul on its way to perdition, so I decided that I would at least never soil myself with the worst of all sins, namely, ingratitude. I would always remember my debts of gratitude, always repay my benefactors a hundredfold for

the smallest advantage or favour. Indeed I went so far as to swear to myself that I would never profit by the benefits given me but for the purpose of praising my benefactors, and even in the field of education, I would never learn anything without learning and honouring my teacher's name and generosity first and foremost. This may sound a bit excessive as a form of self-chastisement, even for a grown person, but it is only in the description of such processes as are praised from the outside and in their adult consequences, that they may seem unthinkable for a child's mind. In reality they represent but survival of the child in the adult. All that is needed to bring them about is the timidity of a child afraid of divine punishment or of adult reproach if he should dare forget that he must quote his father or his mother every time he remembers that the earth turns or that the sun goes up and down.

"Who has told you these things? Where would you be if a loving father (or mother) had not worked very hard to learn them and to pass them on to you?"

MY PARENTS were generous. They contented themselves with exacting that minimum of gratitude that all parents exact of their children for the fact that they feed them and clothe them instead of throwing them into the river as they well may if they so pleased, the child having no voice in the matter and no means of self-defence. And that is bad enough. But in the case of my grandmother they always came out with new evidence that the whole world should have thanked her for everything. Which evidence was given by my mother to my father in my presence, or even when I was not there, in a tone of conversation, as if this were a social occasion and one of the two had come as a guest of the other for tea. I thus formed the belief that my mother went out of the house every night (they always stayed together in the daytime) to gather new details of the deeds of this wonderful person (my grandmother) whose untimely disappearance was still the object of universal grief. How could my mother otherwise have always had new things to recount that my father had never heard about? I knew from my own experiences in the world how difficult it was to have something new to tell, even for a few seconds. All my most interesting accounts of what I had experienced, heard, or thought during a day came to an end after only a few minutes, even if I had recourse to a

detailed description of what I had seen in shop windows, or of the animals I had seen at the zoo. Or the trees in the park. That my parents had not always known each other seemed a bit strange to me.

"Good afternoon, sir."

"Good afternoon, madam."

And then: "Oh, you must be my wife, if I am not mistaken."

"You are right, and you must be my husband."

"True."

"How are you, sir?"

"Very well, and you?"

"Oh, very well indeed."

"And how are the children?"

"Oh, you mean our children?"

"Yes."

"Very well, thank you, they are asleep in the next room."

Etc. Now was that not strange? Yet it was true, and what our parents did every afternoon was but the continuation of this comedy. What made those gatherings especially interesting for me was that I always learned extraordinary new things, and all on the same subject, all constantly leading to the same known conclusion, that there existed no gratitude on earth.

"Anything, anything, I would rather admit than lack of gratitude," said my mother, "theft, murder, are a thousand times preferable to these manifestations of human criminality."

Then came the examples. She opened the *Revue des Deux Mondes* at random, and found in it an article by a certain philosopher or a certain psychologist and she almost at once exclaimed:

"How strange! These are mother's ideas! I remember so clearly when she suggested them to the man who has written this article! Isn't it awful that he should have taken such unfair advantage of her genius? Why not acknowledge at least that the ideas came from her?"

I remember her reading a book about Gladstone. I did not know that Gladstone had been dead for some time. She at once recalled how Gladstone had been staying at the same hotel with my grandmother in Lausanne, and how he had discussed all the major problems of the time with her, how she had given him advice, and how he had thanked her in a letter for her "most stimulating conversation and her brilliant remarks." And now my mother recognised in Gladstone's life the pattern of her mother's own foreign policy for Great Britain.

"He could have told her he was going to use her ideas," she concluded. "What hypocrites, the British!"

Also my father did this, but he attributed all the discoveries and ideas to Leonardo and to other great Italians. When he read in the papers that for the first time in history a man-made iron bird had crossed the Alps, and that the French claimed credit for the flight (the pilot's name being Chavez), he said: "It should have been an Italian, and the plane should have carried the inscription '*This was made possible by the genius of Leonardo.*'"

Thus every time the telephone rang, he mentioned the fact that the telephone had been invented by an Italian, Meucci, and not by Alexander Graham Bell, an American. Meucci was a Florentine, like Dante. And when he explained the pendulum to us he said: "Remember, Galileo's pendulum. Thanks to an Italian we can say it is now seven o'clock!"

BUT luckily for us, neither Meucci, nor Galileo, nor Leonardo were our grandparents. Among the people who had been helped by my grandmother there was even Tolstoy, with whom there was a phonetic link: his wife and my grandmother had exactly the same name. And also an epistular link: my grandmother had translated his essays into German. He too, who had thanked my grandmother for her thoughts on the Kingdom of God and everlasting peace, had then failed to let her know that he was going to develop these thoughts "so typical of her" in his new essays on both these subjects. Had she only known that a man she so worshipped had agreed with her views so completely... she might still be with us. "These are the things that help you stay alive: the feeling that what one has given has been fully received. All the rest does not count."

But even more than the ideas she had given Tolstoy and (so I thought in my ignorance) Galileo and Voltaire, not to mention a number of psychiatrists of the French school, were all the precious friendships that people had established in her house with other people, forgetting that those were *her* friends, and that their fortunes, even at times their marriages, their children, were due to my grandmother's generosity. How many people had grown rich and powerful because they had met someone with her help or at her house! And how many had profited by her advice! Madame Morosoff, just to mention one of them, the greatest steel in-

dustrialist in Russia at that time, had applied my grandmother's advice in an industrial crisis which had threatened to become a small revolution. Her thirty thousand workers (I am quoting from memory, I have carefully avoided checking all these fragments of a child's recollections) had gone on strike. The director of the steel mills had been nailed into a barrel, rolled down to the river and drowned. Madame Morosoff had gone to the mills unaccompanied, faced her workers, and asked them to stop all that nonsense. And they had stopped, hanging their heads in shame. Anyway, the whole plan had been suggested to her by my grandmother, whose husband had at one time faced a crisis of the same type even if on an infinitely smaller scale (he had three hundred workers, and his were cotton mills, not steel mills), and it was my grandmother's advice that had prevailed on that occasion.

With so many examples of ingratitude trumpeted into my ears all the time, could I help feeling as I felt? I decided that gratitude would become my life career, and for a day or so I kept this a great secret, then, as no one seemed to notice how grateful I was, and the ingratitude of others was beginning to irritate me, I decided to reveal it to the only person from whom it should have been kept secret: namely, my mother. I even told her so. "Don't tell yourself you must not know this, it is a great surprise for you."

She was so grateful to me, she called me grandmother's only worthy descendant, and I went to bed that evening feeling so proud that I recall no other such occasion in my life. Before going to bed I marched all through the house with my hands behind my back and my head high, I was aflame with imagination, I saw detailed scenes of my future life pass in front of my eyes, in which scenes I, forgetful of injustice and slander and even of physical violence, insisted on being grateful to my enemies for a small act of kindness they had done me years before and which they, but not I, had forgotten. And my grandmother blinked at me from the sky with such abundant tears of happiness that for the first time in the history of the universe, as I remarked triumphantly, it could be said that rain was falling from a star. This remark made me famous at once. But the next time I lost my temper she took unfair advantage of my confidence and ridiculed me in front of everybody.

"So this is a knight in armour who defends

his grandmother? The one who has sworn never to forget a benefit as long as he lives? Come and look at him, children," said she, calling my brothers to the scene. "Do you know who this is?"—and she revealed my secret, imitating my style and even my pronunciation, concluding in a violent diatribe against me:

"Oh no. You, a grateful person? You, a champion of charity and justice? You, my boy, are the least grateful person in this world. You think only of yourself."

My humiliation reached a climax that suddenly transformed me into the very person whose description had wounded me so only a minute before. It was the very opposite of an act of rebellion. It was pure obedience. Confronted with such proofs of my hypocrisy, my selfishness, my cruelty, I became selfish, hypocritical, cruel. It was an acted out confession, or the confession of an actor for whom every bodily expression, every form of relationship between him and the objects in his room is a word in his grammar and a rule in his syntax.

I RECALL this occasion because it was my funeral. My parents did not know that I was accompanying my character, crying behind him like a mourner. It was a form of maturation from superficial to deep sorrow, I, who until that day had always cried like a child for superficial reasons, was now crying so deep beneath the surface of the earth that no one could suspect the existence of that torrent of tears under my feet. My parents took it very badly: they saw only what they saw with their eyes, and it shocked them that I should not be playing the usual ham-act of true love and repentance. So to cure me of the devil that was in me, my father gave me a public spanking until I cried "Enough, enough! I promise to be good!"

In the course of this ceremony, touched as he was by my cries, he beat me more and more strongly to punish himself at my expense, then told me: "I am hurting myself more than I could ever hurt you," he said. This was a bit too much; to regain my lost dignity, I decided to turn this into a stunt and make everybody laugh. Trembling in every limb because I knew what was going to follow, I said, "Yes, but whose arse is red here? Yours or mine?" (To say "arse" in 1913 or '14 was a crime even for an adult. A child from a good family who said such a word to his father became an insoluble problem.) This time I was given the honour of a punishment in which he did not get the lion's

share, every blow was meant to hurt me and me alone.

"How is that possible?" shouted my father at the top of his voice. "I suffer to punish him, I tell him so to have at least a bit of understanding from him, I almost apologise to him for performing my duty, and is this the result?"

That was my first experience of a heavy price paid for a brilliant remark. But this was not my style at all. In fact, I never had any relief from such performances. They were lies then and later, when I specialised in them at a price constantly heavier, and not so much in punishment as in repentance. I despised myself thoroughly for behaving that way. Sensitive as I was, I reviewed the whole scene in my mind as I knelt in a corner afterwards or (much later in life) as I went into a corner by myself because no one was close enough or bold enough (or cared enough) to punish me, and there I savoured all the sadness of the episode. Also: and this is an important element in my confession, the episode became amusing only in its re-telling. Which was all pure invention, even when the brilliant remark had been actually made, because my voice was always trembling with emotion, so that the brilliant words themselves were mostly inaudible. Thus, without at all possessing the stage-presence of a clown, I earned for myself the useless (and unwanted) reputation of being one. No one was more ashamed than I after such a performance, and no one prouder when he heard it re-told. My father decided that he must break my character and eventually did, poor man, and he worked very hard to obtain such a wonderful result. I must describe the whole process in full.

The humiliation caused by that physical punishment and the loud declaration of my unworthiness left real physical traces all around me, more so than on my battered behind. I grew hungry for silence, not to rest in it myself, but to use it as cotton wool with which to soak up all the shrieks and the insults that others might have heard. I wanted to dry up every memory of what had just taken place in the house, I wanted time, not only silence, plenty of time to push everything away towards the dark well of the past in which guilt loses its sting. I hurried up the clock, and I spied on the faces of my parents, my brothers, and the maids, for signs of boredom and indifference, even after my claim to high ideals had been fully re-established. Those faces had been far too attentive before. They had relished my ruin, they

had formed silent and negative opinions of me, and I wanted to know that these had been forgotten too. Thus I began quite early to suspect that perhaps an ideal of gratitude placed on so high a level was not prudent, but, on the other hand, I could not artificially try to remember my past fallibility nor accept the idea that it would soon present itself again. I really felt that I was not the same person who had sinned, and I had, for that naughty child of a minute before the same contempt I had for last year's shoes and clothes and for their impotence to follow me in my growth. Promising to be a man five or ten minutes after having been a child was part of the technique of full forgiveness. Neither I nor my father believed much of these promises after a while, but we made them again all the same, he, because he believed that this might have a good effect on me: "*Promissio boni viri est obligatio*," he would say; and I, because it seemed to me that he believed in them. There was no end to my ambition of saintliness and gratitude and peace, that infinite peace that only comes from the approval of the persons we love. But there remained a residue of shame, submissiveness, and fear, which upset my relationship with everybody else.

That is the reason I became closer to my father: I knew that he alone had completely forgiven me. The others had been too indifferent to have gone so far down and come back so far up to the surface again, tied to me like the devil to the damned. There was also the fact that my father knew how to sell me his medicine: his blows, he claimed, had completely purged me of the devil. And he advised that I mumble to myself whenever I felt the temptation of wickedness surge up in me: "*Vade retro, Satana*." With this, he kept insisting that the devil was nothing but a "*Fictio mentis*" of the lowly. "Give yourself time and anger will subside," he said. These words are time absorbent, any other words would do just as well, except that these are better: they have always been used by saints and geniuses, there is a great moral tradition attached to them, and besides, they are true.

"Satan is a name for our pride: Satan must go."

Then I began to feel that violence was part of love, and that my father loved me more than he loved the others, because he had beaten me more. Thus, when any doubt arose in which I might have won my point by using my intelligence and my persuasive powers in discussions

with others, I preferred to deliberately force the issue and make way for the devil in me, because for one thing it was shorter than to carry on a discussion with my brothers or with a stupid maid, and secondly, it was also shorter from the moral point of view. I knew that if my brothers or the maids made the slightest remark about my "well-known evil temper" I would hit them at once, feeling the unfairness of this blow, so why not hit immediately, why not repeat my well-known role of the boy possessed by the devil, in order to be able to sit quietly with my father, he and I alone like two grown persons, after the usual fall and resurrection? In other words: *the road that leads to peace through pain seemed far shorter and surer than the road through well-ordered conversation*. And also more rewarding: in the end I alone was worthy of his attention, while the others were excluded. They would stand on their own. If this was the beginning of masochism it was for precise, logical reasons: to find an understanding not to be left alone.

MY MOTHER never had any definite plans to transform me or to break me. She was simply using me, as she used everyone else, to bring herself as often as she possibly could to a crisis of tears, thus renewing the illusion that her mother had just died and her feeling of loss was still undampened by the passage of time. She could not even think in terms of a moral education that would carry either me or any of my brothers towards a given future of our own, from which she was excluded. She wanted to be a child together with her children, Time being our common enemy. Independence and loneliness were to her the same evil. Whenever trouble was about to arise, she claimed it for herself to celebrate her solitude by asking me: "What would your grandmother say if she could see you now?" Then instantly, without bothering to wait and see whether this question had not struck the right chord in my heart (it always had, all that was needed now was a cheerful tone) she dealt the final blow: "I am glad she has died." After such a stupid remark made in bad faith, all she could do was cry and accuse me.

Frankly, I preferred my father's blows. If one must cry, he gave me a lot to cry about and quickly, too. With her, instead, all I could do was to let her have the right of way and wait. I was emotionally exhausted, there was a feeling of great rest about me, a pleasant silence, a

temptation to close my eyes and sleep, to which temptation I could never yield. I was on duty, like a guard in high uniform at an official ceremony. How dare I, who had heard such hard words about myself, I, forever condemned to infamy, I, who had made my mother cry, fall asleep like an angel and snore? But it was all so tiresome. If at least she would come to the point (I knew all the phases of the process by heart), in which she asked me: "Aren't you sorry for what you did? Don't you want to be good again?" But it took her so long to reach that point that, when she came to it, she herself was about to fall asleep, and we still had quite a long way to go, long detours through the forests of reproach and repentance; this was like the "long way home" in our afternoon walks, while father's trial and punishment was like a brisk winter walk along the lake and back home by the short-cut through the park. Because she always wanted to cry twice during these scenes: having embarked upon the painful trip through her own past, having recalled what she herself had done to her poor mother years before, how could she just forgive herself and forget all about it so easily? Only one person could forgive her, and that person, alas, was gone forever.

"Gone forever," she said, this being the verbal faucet to the fountains of tears. "Gone forever," and down they streamed, those tears. She cried so that it killed every filial affection, every trace of human pity in me. There remained only fear in front of so much suffering. Also a great shame for her in front of me, because she became ugly, her nose became red, the harmony of her face was destroyed by strange muscular contractions, as if she was about to laugh. I felt like shouting "Stop it!" as one cries to an adult when he is about to scare a child and does so by simply making faces at him. Reconciliation and forgiveness came in those cases at one millimetre from indifference, half a minute before supper, a walk, or nightly rest.

"Let's not think of these things any more," she said.

"Thank God," I thought, and yawned at once.

BUT there remained grandmother's holy objects, holy umbrellas, holy hat, holy fur coats, holy jewels, stationery, books and toys, everything she had owned, and that was everything we had, except for children's shoes and for a couple of night-pots in the nursery, and each of these sacred things could tell our grand-

mother how it had been touched or looked at, our very secret thoughts could be revealed by them to her, they were spies, also amulets, they even had secret curative powers in a way, morally at least.

"I was just looking at grandmother's things."

"I was playing with grandmother's peacock, grandmother's duck, grandmother's turkey."

These were excellent reasons to be thought innocent and left alone. And if I happened to be roaming the house with evil plans in mind, or evil thoughts (nothing exceptional: a lie to tell or to conceal, or the rehearsal of a scene of liberation, imagining that my brothers had all died, I being the only survivor and my parents' only hope), I stayed carefully away from all those objects, without doing so deliberately: I was guided by an instinctive knowledge of the opportunity of certain associations, for I knew that a soul engaged in sin should not be exposed to those sources of virtue. Perhaps what also worked here was a habit of associating those objects with a peaceful and blessed state of mind. And I recall a very clear nostalgia for those objects that were still only a few steps away from me, as if that very first withdrawal marked the beginning of a long journey from which there was no safe return. There was almost a fatigue of the Unknown in me, not only of the Unknown: also of the effort it would take to explain to those objects that my thoughts were not really so evil, and my lie not so grave. Which shows that I did have a sense of measure, for I knew that pictures and objects could not see me, but that I could see them. I knew that if I looked at them they would at once be invested by me with true existence and that, once the spell began functioning, nothing could stop it. The notion: "Those pictures are just cardboard and light, or canvas and pastel, or white paper and pencil," did not serve any more.

Thus the growing security given by age and health and the infinite joy attending them could only help me cheat God and disbelieve all I was taught about Him that was fearful. But I was not always well, and with illness came fear and a feeling of guilt.

I WAS the fourth of a crop of five children, three born before my grandmother's health had begun to be seriously impaired. It had always been seriously impaired, she had always been sick, always on the point of dying, always wounded, battered to a pulp, pushed, carried,

dragged to her grave by thankless children, but then also always healthy, alert, attached to life, an example of indomitable energy and wit to the very last moment of her life. One never knew what to believe, so one took everything as gospel truth and shining evidence of her perfection. Three of us were born before her exceptional agony, as I had begun to say, but not free of putrefaction, either. Another corpse was still rotting away while my grandmother was alive: that of her father. When she finally died, taking with her of course all the perfection of the world, he automatically graduated to a heaven of evil, from which he looked down upon us in the glory of his sins.

No longer worthy of tears (he had had far too many), he was now a free target to laughter and abuse. But then even this abuse was of a sacred character. When my mother, describing her grandfather, said of him: "He was a thief, a scoundrel, and a swine," this did not mean that we, his great-grandchildren, should be ashamed of him. Oh no. These words were spoken with a nostalgic love of theft, arrogance, ignorance, avarice, vanity, murder, the whole list of the capital sins enriched with the latest additions in the field of criminal pathology, as if these and these alone had been her guiding principles and her ideals. She delighted in telling the most horrible tales about him: how he had slowly murdered his wife (this was not true at all, she had died of tuberculosis, so the best blow in his career had not been dealt by him but by the usual God). He had tried to bring up his four children to his own standards of stupidity and cruelty: they had deserted him and he had let

them starve for years. His only daughter, my grandmother, who had married the man he had chosen for her, eloped with a young man from a very poor family and asked for a divorce, which in those days, in a Lutheran family of the most solid banking bourgeoisie of Moscow, was regarded as a crime. She had finally married the young man and lived with him in great poverty until he had made good; in fact, he became richer than his father-in-law, and only then did the old man show lenience towards his daughter, but it was she now who refused to receive him in the house, so he did everything he could to ruin her husband. Even his youngest son who had stayed with him was forced to leave in the end, for he took special pleasure in humiliating everyone. Only when people were completely destroyed, both morally and financially, did he seem satisfied for a brief moment, and when they came to him begging for help, it was his joy to sneer at them and have them kicked out of the house by his servants. After these tales were told in front of his large portrait in our living-room, there remained in the air an aura of pride and modesty, the same that follows all great music: the pride that we were able to understand it, and be made humble by its beauty. That a very special tone be needed for this litany of ancestral abuse I was made to realise the day I tried it on a guest, repeating the same words I had heard from my mother many times. I was stopped and sent to bed.

"One does not say these things."

"But you say them all the time."

"That is an entirely different matter."

And it was.

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Enlightenment and Radicalism

By Sidney Hook

THE FIELD of intellectual history is beset by many difficulties. Primary among them is the extent to which the assumption—inescapable to the very nature of the enquiry—that history is made or determined by the ideas men hold, is true. Leaving aside the influence of complex objective factors of the physical environment, the pattern of historical events seems clearly to be woven out of the interacting influences of interests, ideas, and personality. To assign relative weights to these elements is a delicate task. The best-grounded historical accounts have revealed the unplausibility of all monisms even when the predominance of one or another factor has been established for a specific period.

The difficulties of intellectual history are compounded when we attempt to assess the influence of philosophical ideas on human affairs. Here the temptation to yield to one's own philosophical prejudices, to use the record as an argument or as evidence for one's own philosophical beliefs is almost overwhelming. But if our investigation is to rise above a disguised question—begging apologetics and reach conclusions which appear valid to enquirers of other philosophical persuasions, we must resist this temptation. In other words, we must regard the influence of philosophical ideas in history not as a philosophical problem but as an historical, empirical problem, in principle no different from an enquiry into the effects of the industrial revolution on the movement of population or the causes of the Spanish-American war.

It is from this point of view that I propose to examine Professor Michael Polanyi's main theses in his essay "Beyond Nihilism,"* and also to say a few things in defence of the principle of radicalism which, according to him, threatens "to throw us back into disaster" if acted upon.

AS I UNDERSTAND Professor Polanyi, he is asserting two propositions: (1) The influence of the rationalist ideal of a secular society, which we associate with the Enlightenment, in fact led to the monstrous Bolshevik and Nazi Revolutions of the 20th century. (2) The characteristic doctrines and practices of modern totalitarianism or nihilism are "logical consequences" of this rationalist ideal, particularly of its naturalist forms.

With respect to the first thesis everything that Professor Polanyi says seems to me to be a crass illustration of a very loose form of the *post hoc, propter hoc* fallacy. I do not find a shred of valid evidence to support the view that the rationalist and universal humanistic ideals of the Enlightenment played any role, no less a decisive one, in the theory and practice of the architects of the Communist and Nazi Revolutions. On the other hand, there is considerable evidence—a whole mountain of it—against this view.

Indeed, Professor Polanyi himself when confronted by the fact that the ideals of Locke and Bentham, imported into France with such allegedly disastrous consequences, helped in England and the United States to create an unprecedented, humane welfare-economy, not even approached by any religious culture of the past, explains this in terms of the moderating effect of existing institutions. Without examining the truth of the specific assertions made concerning the institutions in England and in the United States which prevented "the self-destructive implications of the Enlightenment" from being realised, such recognition is completely inadmissible on a theory, such as Professor Polanyi's, that ascribes decisive historical importance to philosophical ideas.

For it can be argued with equal, if not better, logic that what explains the differences in the development of Anglo-American liberalism and European totalitarianism is *not* the presence of ideals but different social institutions which, in the one case, permitted the gradual social re-

* ENCOUNTER, March, 1960.

forms to develop that were inherent in commitment to the ideals of the Enlightenment, and in the other inhibited them, until the obstructive institutions were swept away by revolution. I myself do not believe that this is the whole story, but historically it has much more to be said for it than the view that the ideals of the Enlightenment entailed revolutionary action. It is certainly closer to the findings of those historians and sociologists who have called attention to the existence of authoritarian social structures in Germany and Russia as predisposing factors towards totalitarianism.

PROBLEMS OF HISTORICAL CAUSATION as they relate to ideas are tangled enough without snarling them still more with speculations about ultimate doctrinal genealogy and influence. Empirically we must begin here with the quest for proximate causes.

The best source books of the ideas which influenced the leaders of the Nazi Revolution are still Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Alfred Rosenberg's *Der Mythos des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*. Hitler's intellectual mentor was neither Hegel, Nietzsche, nor Spengler. It was Houston Chamberlain whose racialist mythology, irrationalism, and mysticism is as far as anyone can get from the ideals of the Enlightenment. To be sure, as Professor Polanyi points out, the Nazi cohorts were imbued with a consuming messianic passion and zeal. But it was precisely this type of passion and zeal which was suspect in the eyes of the founding fathers of the Enlightenment. This is especially true of Locke, Hume, Voltaire, Bentham, and the philosopher-statesmen of the American Republic. They distrusted "enthusiasm" as the concomitant of religious fanaticism. Rousseau's glorification of feeling was foreign to them, so much so that one of the standard criticisms of the rationalism of the Enlightenment is that the chill finger of reason stifled the life of the emotions. It was not the martyrs of Christian piety but the legendary figures of Roman Republican virtue who figured in the writings of the Enlightenment as models of excellence.

WITH ONE PROVISIO, it is just as far-fetched to attribute to the rationalism of the Enlightenment causal influence on the animating ideals of the leaders of the Russian October Revolution. The Bolsheviks came to power by an historical fluke and in flagrant disregard of the principles of traditional Marxism. No one was more surprised than Lenin himself that the Bolsheviks succeeded in remaining in power. In Bolshevik eyes the ideals of the Enlightenment were the expression *par excellence* of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois spirit

and not of an international classless society. Their thinking, so to speak, was two intellectual epochs removed from rationalism. To the extent that they were Marxists, they were critical of the unhistorical approach of the Enlightenment, and insisted that what was reasonable in society could only be determined by stages in historical evolution which narrowly limited the alternatives of action. To the extent that they were Bolsheviks, they discarded the restraining and moderating sense of traditional Marxism for objective limitation, and espoused an extreme form of voluntarism. They ruled by fiat and not by reason.

To regard the Bolsheviks as heirs of Hegel and Marx, and at the same time as the executors, rather than the executioners, of the legacy of the Enlightenment, is completely unintelligible in view of Hegel's hostile attitude to the rationalism of the Enlightenment—an attitude not without obvious influence on Marx. The whole of the Hegelian philosophy of history as well as the Hegelian logic was designed to draw the teeth of the rationalism, and especially, the individualism of the Enlightenment. And here Hegel drew not only from Rousseau but from Burke!

ALTHOUGH MARX WAS NOT opposed to the ideals of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution—he was always ready to defend "European liberty" against "Russian barbarism"—his relativism and naturalism under-cut the fanatical absolutism of moral imperatives which Professor Polanyi associates with the Enlightenment. Marx's insistence on referring to the historical context and operational expression of moral ideals in order to understand their concrete meaning distinguishes him from those reformers whose slogans appeared to him to be merely emotive abstractions, some of which were as old as Christianity. Whatever the intellectual difficulties in this approach, it was a challenge to all Utopians to check their claims and demands against existing historical interests, and the cost of realising them. Marx was a Utopian, too, but a different kind of Utopian. Those whom he criticised disregarded or underestimated the stubborn facts of *present* history, especially conflicts of class interest: Marx's Utopianism expressed itself in the expectation that man would abolish empirical history in the future. His vision of a classless, stateless society without conflict was as much an offence against the principle of dialectic or process as the Hegelian vision of a Prussianised world.

ALL THIS ASIDE, it is incontrovertible that the twist which European socialism under the leadership of German Social-Democracy

gave to historical materialism, far from encouraging the dynamic and activist tendencies in Marxism, tamed them, and substituted the inevitability of gradualism for the inevitability of violent revolution. For the Social-Democratic leadership, the ripeness, not the readiness, was all—so much so that on occasions conditions were permitted to become so rotten-ripe that the maggots of totalitarianism found a favourable environment to develop.

The socialist revisionism of Bernstein in Germany and Jaurès in France stressed the ideals of the Enlightenment not in order to encourage more revolutionary action, but to make the socialist movement aware of its actual reformist practices and to liberate it from its revolutionary phrasemongery which frightened off possible electoral allies. When Socialist Parties were in power in Europe, their error lay not in too much planning but in too little, not in a bold rationality to re-make society but in the timid improvisation of a series of holding operations to preserve a chaotic *status quo*.

THE CHIEF CAUSES of the Bolshevik and Nazi Revolutions have very little to do with doctrinal beliefs. They are to be found in the First World War and its consequences. Not 1789 but 1914 deserves the title of the Year of the Second Fall of Man. Whoever sees a connection between the secular rationalism of the Enlightenment and the ideals and policies of the leading nations and statesmen on the eve of the First World War can only do so in virtue of the unexamined dogma that everything in the world is related to everything else—an assumption which every piece of scientific knowledge refutes, both in natural and human affairs.

The Bolsheviks got their opportunity not by invoking the rationalist ideals of the Enlightenment but by exploiting the hunger of the Russian masses for peace, and the desire of sensitive minds everywhere to liberate the world from the insane folly of a war whose real issues had far more to do with questions of national prestige and economic hegemony than with the issues of "democracy and freedom." Looking back at the fateful days in which the names of Lenin and Trotsky were practically unknown outside of small circles in Russia, Kerensky is convinced that his major error was that he "did not take Russia out of the war" after the Kornilov revolt. The reason that Churchill was unable to strangle Bolshevism in its cradle was that it rallied to its banner in the early years supporters who were unified not by Marxist doctrine or ideology, but only by their opposition to war. In every country where the Communist movement gained a foothold, it began as an anti-war movement. The favourite

rationalisation of the tender-minded supporters of Communism, when the news of Bolshevik terror seeped through to the West, was that the price of revolution was small compared to the holocaust of another world war which could be avoided only in a socialist world.

An entire volume can be written on the relation between the First World War and the October Revolution. In order to parade the ghosts of the Enlightenment as causative factors in such an account, it would first be necessary to detail the rational efforts made by the ruling groups to plan for peace, instead of preaching it, to control political events by rational allocation of economic resources—in short to do some of the things that a secularist outlook on the world requires. Such measures cannot be detailed because they didn't exist. Indeed, if the leaders of the international socialist movement had been fired with a touch of the audacity of the great figures of the French Revolutionary movement, instead of being caught up in the hysteria of nationalism, they might have succeeded, if not in preventing the First World War, then in shortening it.

THERE IS NO AGREEMENT among historians on how to weigh the causes of the rise to power of German National Socialism. The inflation and economic depression, resentment at the Treaty of Versailles, the desire of the industrialists to curb Social Democracy and the trade unions, the Communist theory of "social-fascism" and practical collaboration with the Nazis, the failure of the Allies to make the concessions to the Weimar Republic which they subsequently made to Hitler—all played an incomparably greater role than the witches' brew of doctrine—not one of whose elements was new—with which the Nazis intoxicated themselves. The Nazis proudly regarded themselves in a rare moment of truthfulness as "the counter-revolution" to the ideals of the 18th-century Enlightenment.

I NOW TURN to the second of Professor Polanyi's theses which asserts that the ideals of the Enlightenment are inherently unstable and logically entail the nihilism of totalitarian belief and practice. This assertion resembles the contentions of Arnold Toynbee and Jacques Maritain that if one does not worship God, one must worship either Stalin or Hitler or some other human being.

There are two initial difficulties in any such position. First, even if there were a *logical* connection between certain philosophical premises and certain conclusions that have a potential bearing on conduct, this relationship alone would be no warrant for asserting that

human beings *in fact* are guided by it. This is particularly true if the relationship is exhibited in a complicated chain of reasoning. Men are notoriously slack in their reasoning and have a livelier sense of the uses to which they can put doctrines than of their strict implications. To imagine that they guide themselves in crucial situations by the logic of their premises and assumptions—of which they are often blissfully unaware—is to impute a rationality to them which exceeds the claims of most secular rationalists in history.

Second, as Professor Polanyi uses the word “rationalism,” it is an umbrella term which covers a bewildering variety of doctrines and thinkers.

If we speak of “sceptical rationalism” then we must exclude Locke who believed that moral truths were as certain as those of mathematics. If we speak of “absolute and inalienable rights” then we must exclude Bentham who regarded the language of the Declaration of Independence as “nonsense on stilts.” If we speak of Voltaire and Hume, then we must exclude the romanticism of Rousseau. Professor Polanyi speaks of all these tendencies and figures as integral to the culture-complex of the Enlightenment despite the fact that in some relevant and important respects they differ more among themselves than some of them do from the early Burke and the later Hegel (whose *Rechtsphilosophie*, for example, borrows heavily from Rousseau). Nowhere does Professor Polanyi give us a clear statement of what he takes the essential doctrines of the Enlightenment to be. In one place he suggests that the rationalism of Voltaire and Gibbon might have fulfilled the hopes of man for a civilised society had they not been blighted by “Christian fervour.” Does this mean that rationalism was at fault in being too tepid in its critique of Christian fanaticism, too tolerant of the spirit of intolerance? Or does it mean that any doctrine held with a zeal and passion disproportionate to the evidence of experience threatens to unleash the furies of totalitarianism? Then why make the philosophy of the Enlightenment which sought to enstate the self-critical processes of reason or intelligence as the supreme authority of truth in human affairs, and as the supreme arbiter of the inescapable conflicts among human values, the scapegoat of historical disasters? Wars and revolutions have resulted in large part from a refusal to deal intelligently with their social causes.

LET US LOOK a little closer at some of the implications Professor Polanyi professes to see inherent in the “rationalist ideal of a secular society.”

One of the implications is alleged to be “an unrestrained individualism, demanding absolute freedom and equality far beyond the limits imposed by any existing society.” It would be interesting to see how Professor Polanyi derives this conclusion. A rationalist ideal by its very nature cannot approve any unrestrained *‘ism* and *a fortiori* not an individualism which is arbitrary and unchecked by discipline. Whether the rational ideal is conceived in terms of the compulsions of logic or fact, whether its pattern is assimilated to that of scientific method or the sobrieties of critical common sense, it cannot countenance for a moment “unrestrained individualism”—which is madness, “absolute freedom”—which is anarchy, and “absolute equality”—which is impossible.

The rational ideal has been conceived in various senses by thinkers of the Enlightenment. Not one bears the construction Professor Polanyi places on them. He seems to forget that the philosophers of the Enlightenment did not write with the precision with which modern philosophers address each other to-day, but in order to influence action. It is an error to read them with a near-sighted literalism in disregard of the specific historical context and of the audience to whom they addressed their appeals. The authors of the *Declaration of Independence* knew that when they proclaimed that “all men are created equal,” that they were not describing a fact or even uttering a prescription to guide the establishment of complete equality. It no more follows that because the Enlightenment philosophers held that in certain relevant moral and political respects human beings should be treated equally that, therefore, they also held that men should be declared equal or be treated equally in every respect, than it followed that because the philosophers of Christian piety believed that all men are equal in the sight of the Lord that they therefore were committed to the belief that all men are equal before the Law or that all should be politically free.

The difference between the philosophers of the Enlightenment and their religious predecessors is that the first believed intelligence should guide human beings in the difficult and complex problems of determining in what respects, and how, injustices among men should be abolished—while the second fell back on Revelation or Dogma. Since these had no empirical consequences, it meant, as a rule, relying on the traditions and customs of the past with all their built-in discrimination against those who were not well-born.

A SECOND IMPLICATION which Professor Polanyi finds in the rationalist ideal of a secular society is a commitment to “a popular government,

exercising absolute power" in order to provide for "the absolute sovereignty of the individual." If "the individual" means *every* individual, then no rational person can believe without stultification that a popular government exercising absolute power can achieve it, since by definition the minority in a popular government (for not all decisions can be unanimous in a popular government) must give way to the rule of the majority. But the whole idea that on any rational ideal popular government must exercise absolute or unlimited power is a myth, except in the sense that some provision must be made for a process of decision which is controlled by and responsible to those affected by the decision.

The American Constitution is a secular document inspired by ideas derived from Montesquieu and other philosophers of the Enlightenment. It does not give the government absolute or unlimited power. And in historic fact, as Professor Polanyi himself recognises, the English "Constitution" which accepts the supremacy of Parliament has never identified the concept of "supremacy" with the concept of "unlimited." The very variety of non-secular faiths in the world requires that a rational ideal of secular society be pluralistic in spirit and operation. The commitment of a rationalist to popular government is based upon the Aristotelian insight that in human affairs it is less likely that the many will be misled or corrupted than one or a few, and that, therefore, going beyond Aristotle, the ultimate appeal from the decisions of an unenlightened majority should be sought in the decisions of an enlightened majority.

THE THIRD IMPLICATION drawn by Professor Polanyi is that rationalism entails the ideals of "an amoral individualism." This is as gratuitous as the other alleged implications and is as unfair to the naturalistic rationalism of the Encyclopædists (especially Diderot) as it is to the critical rationalism of Kant. The common appeal of all species of rationalism is to "the reasonable man," which is perfectly compatible with the recognition that not all men are reasonable and no man wholly so. The common faith of all species of rationalism is in the process of mediation which again is perfectly compatible with the recognition that this faith will be defeated where no common interests can be found or created. Even if it be argued that no rational process is sufficient to establish morality, that Socrates and John Dewey notwithstanding, intelligence is not even a necessary condition of virtue, can we seriously doubt that the rational ideal is the most adequate safeguard we have against the amorism, or nihilism, or mad

religious enthusiasm, which flourish when the distinctions between myth and fact are first blurred and then obliterated?

IT IS OBVIOUS from the foregoing that I see nothing calamitous in returning to the ideals of the Enlightenment—if, indeed, we are returning to them which, as I read the evidence, is more of a hope than a fact. But whatever the fact, I for one believe we *should* return to the secular rationalism of the Enlightenment. When I say we should "return," I mean, of course, return with the difference that the growth of knowledge and the perspective of broad experience make to minds capable of learning from the past. We can now distinguish more clearly between what is perennially valid in the approach of 18th-century rationalism and its local or aberrant forms.

What we have learned about the logic of modern science, the patterns of scientific methods, and the findings of modern psychology should immunise us against the easy optimism of the past—whose secular forms, we note in passing, never rivalled the stupendous myths with which religion consoled believers. It should enable us to develop those habits of reasonable expectation which are the hallmarks of a mature outlook on man and history. Modern science suggests to us that we do not have to embrace a sterile scepticism because the certainties of absolutism are no longer available to us, that reliable knowledge about human affairs although difficult is obtainable. It suggests that there are always problems, small problems and large problems, but *not one* Great Problem to which a Final or Total Solution can be found. It suggests that like scientific enquiry in any field, intelligent social enquiry is a continuous process and, as in science, that it is easier to agree on the empirical consequences of proposed courses of conduct than on their alleged presuppositions. It suggests that in human affairs history and tradition are inescapably relevant and are at least as important as other technical factors which enter into the costs of innovation.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED from modern psychology is more vague but just as pertinent. It reinforces the wisdom of relating values and ideals to human interests and of exposing these interests to critical consciousness and the counter-claims by which they may be controlled. It suggests that values which are not felt as actual or possible fulfilment of needs can find no purchase in the business of living and run the risk of becoming mealy-mouthed abstractions that conceal our real commitments.

Together with all the other social disciplines,

it suggests that where there are no shared interests there will be no common values, that the first step in approaching conflicts of interest after laying them bare, is to mediate between them, to correct, modify, invent, or discover the social devices or institutional forms by which they can be made viable.

It suggests that we be suspicious of our own zeal and self-righteousness, that we cultivate our powers of imaginative perception in order to see more clearly the human being in the enemy, and to understand that since a sound position may be defended by unsound arguments, we have an obligation to re-think claims which, because of the paltry reasons offered in support of them, we sometimes reject out of hand.

IF THIS APPROACH is taken we may find that we accomplish more by trying to achieve less. But whatever we try to achieve will require more thought, more planning, experiment, and controlled improvisation than secular rationalists have attempted in the past. There is no royal road to social justice and social peace because, among other reasons, there are so many occasions on which they conflict. Would this were realised by the enthusiasts for peace at any price who are cheerfully willing to sacrifice freedom for the permanent civil war of world communism!

A respect for history does not always enjoin caution upon us. Over-cautious drivers can be just as much of a road hazard as speed-demons. Some historical situations have degenerated into chaos because those in a position to act have played it too safe. They have relied more upon the automatic, allegedly self-regulating tendencies of society, or upon the happy chance that something will turn up, than upon their creative intelligence for which, despite all its limitations, there is no substitute.

AS I UNDERSTAND RADICALISM in social life, it is continuous reliance upon the methods of critical intelligence, or of scientific method in its most comprehensive sense, to negotiate conflicts of value in the hope of finding or discovering shared interests that may equitably be enjoyed. Such methods cannot create values, they can only check or test or appraise them in the light of the best available knowledge of their causes and consequences in experience.

The fruitfulness of this approach is to be measured not only by its results but by the consequences of alternative approaches. It does not accept Bertrand Russell's dictum that there is no such thing as an irrational goal or end except one impossible of fulfilment. For when

we examine goals or ends in their actual *problematic* context, we shall find that they are never really final or ultimate. They are penultimate. They are both ends and means in different contexts. They are therefore subject not only to the rationality of the means-end relation but to the rational control of the several compossible ends to which every sane mind is wedded.

In the light of this restatement of the secular rational position, let us look once more at a key passage in Professor Polanyi's criticism of it.

Its argument is simple and has yet to be answered. If society is not a divine institution, it is made by man, and man is free to do with society what he likes. There is then no excuse for having a bad society, and we must make a good one without delay. For this purpose you must take power, and you can take power over a bad society only by a revolution; so you must go ahead and make a revolution. Moreover, to achieve a comprehensive improvement of society you need comprehensive powers; so you must regard all resistance to yourself as high treason and must put it down mercilessly.

One is tempted to say that if the argument is this simple, it does not have to be answered, for it is oversimplified to the point of simple-mindedness. If the conclusion really followed from the argument, I should sympathise with Professor Polanyi's reaction against any philosophy whose premises spawned such nonsense.

But I submit that no sentence follows logically from the preceding one in the above passage.

Not a single statement is free from some formal or material error. Because society is not a divine institution, it does *not* follow that it is made by man, any more than because the earth and the human species are not divine creations, they were made by some other agency. Men to be sure can change themselves; and anthropologists have proved to the hilt Marx's insight that men change themselves most effectively by changing their social institutions. But it does *not* in the least follow that because men can change their institutions and themselves they are free to do what they like, that they can make any change at any time in any respect. They are free, perhaps, *to attempt* to do what they like, just as they are free to attempt to fly without wings or plane. But wishing or liking makes them no more free of the compulsions of subject-matter, of the limitations of time, place, habit, and history, in the one case, than of gravitational forces in the second—admitting that these are two different kinds of compulsion or limitation.

The existence of limitations which condition possibilities may certainly be an adequate

explanation of, and even to some extent an "excuse" for, a bad society, or some features of it, as much so as for bad health. And although recognition that a bad society exists is normally a prelude to a desire to make it better, this tells us nothing about *how* to precede or *when*.

Nor does the kind of operation a society needs, like the kind of operation a body needs, always require that it be performed without delay. Sometimes it is necessary to build up a patient's strength so that he can bear a necessary operation. A society must be historically and psychologically prepared for social changes if they are to be carried out without dangerous shock and resistance. Further, the power to change society may be *won* and not taken, as in England and the United States; and if it is won by peaceful means, a social as well as a political revolution may be carried out without violence. A comprehensive improvement of society does not necessarily require, as the New Deal shows, a comprehensive power. Resistance need not be considered "high treason" where there exist democratic processes through which the grievances of minorities can be vented and relieved.

WE CAN SET Professor Polanyi's fears at rest. Nihilism is a complete *non-sequitur* from the premises of secular rationalism. We can return to them with confidence as a starting-point for fresh advance, subject to the caveats indicated above.

Nothing promises to be more helpful in grappling with the problems of a scientific and technological world than the humanistic and rational spirit of the Enlightenment philosophy. Its explicit and implicit ideals still recommend themselves to the reason of free men—the rule of just law, nationally and internationally, until it acquires world sovereignty; universal and continuous education; the primacy of the individual, not of individualism, in the social process; growth as a qualitative norm of personal development rather than some fixed, predetermined end; the refusal to make politics autonomous of morals and morals autonomous of social and economic life.

These ideals still retain validity for our own day and time as guides to programme and policy. If we go beyond them, it will be by following the vision they have inspired. If we repudiate them, we once more fling the doors wide open to the furies of nihilism.

Bombs

Shuddered I did to think of men
Not unlike me with Hydrogen
Oblivion at their trigger finger
And scant lucidity in anger,
Until I thought Death is inbuilt
In you and me though these cobalt
Contraptions—and of heavy water—
Make us think it's an alien matter.

In plural or in singular,
Dying, of course, is what we are.

Where there is power there is abuse:
I touch my heart and touch the fuse
of time—it every day decreases
And soon will blow this world to pieces—
With something not unlike aplomb;
It's nice to think one has the Bomb.

Thomas Blackburn

THEATRE

Out of the Box

By Nigel Dennis



MR. JOHN OSBORNE'S *Luther* is not a pioneer work; it is an act of consolidation. The men with dirty beards and billycans who defied the swart British natives and hacked their way through—these have been rewarded with their knighthoods and biographies and are now peacefully dead, or looking up from the morning paper to cry to their long-deaf wives: "Good Lord! Remember that God-forsaken place, Setzuan? Well, they're building a luxury hotel there now." Or they may say: "Yes, I did it when I was a youngster, but I'd never do it again. The road seemed like a thousand miles. Of course, they have Land Rovers now."

We refer, of course, to the form which *Luther* takes—twelve scenes running over hill and dale in an almost straight line and eating up the years and principal events of the hero's life as a car eats up the miles. It is the form of the biography, the epic, and many novels; it is "chapters" strung together with selected "intervals" for whisky and the powder-room; it is also a free verse, with the poet looking only to himself for his disciplines and bound by nothing (at least in this particular case) but historical respect. It has much in common with the film form, though it must omit the panoramic visions and bird's-eye views; it is allied to the television play, but incapable of eliminating from the stage everything but the nose and pores of a single impassioned face. In brief, it is new to our century except in pantomime and musical comedy—so entirely new that a pioneer was needed to show how old it was. It is unlikely that anyone could deny that Brecht was the great pioneer in question—or, for that

matter, that Mr. Kenneth Tynan, as the *Observer's* Special Correspondent with the Brecht Trek, was England's very gallant Stanley to that most peculiar German Livingstone. But what is interesting now, is to guess whether Mr. Osborne's appointment as Governor-General will attract boat-loads of young immigrants. At which point the imperial similes had better be dropped; for if once we started mapping the territory of New Brechtia and calling places Shaw's Corner, Bolt's More, Logue's Gulch, etc., there would only be howls from those who were left out; jealousy and cattiness, and "I did it!" and "Oh, no, you didn't!" have been, with eunuchs, the ruin of many a fine colonial service.

THERE IS NO DOUBT that the new form deserves the most ardent study. In the first place, it is not classical save in its use of song and chorus; and even these would seem to derive more from, say, the *St. Matthew Passion* than any Greek original. Secondly, it does not come purely from the old Moralities, for it demands and uses far greater variety of scene than those enjoyed. Indeed, almost the whole root and stock is Elizabethan, in the sense that the Elizabethan drama alone provides the free range of action and narrative line that Brecht required and adopted. It is extraordinary to think that this form might never have disappeared, and never have had to be revived, but for the singular matter of financial economy. For what the form asks is that the audience be content to rate range and diversity of scene higher than a few costly, colourful settings—which is to say, be content to be *told* that a scene is where it is, rather than insist upon *seeing* where it is with their own eyes. If their preference is for the former, there is no limit to the number of scenes a theatre-management can provide; but if it is for the latter, three or four costly Acts is the most that a theatre can hope to pay for. So, if the brilliant stage properties of the opera capture the audi-

ence, the Elizabethan form must go; and even if there were a Maecenas to pay for the extravagant and appropriate setting of every scene in a play of Shakespeare's, the labour of changing these, and the time spent in doing so, would utterly destroy the continuity and tension of the narrative. *The Merchant of Venice* is an extreme example of how a theatre-manager may find a compromise: this play, written in the diverse manner, is played as if strictly in two worlds, Business and Belmont, and seems, fortunately, not to suffer from a division that is imposed upon it by economics—though it has suffered greatly from critics who have not realised this and have treated the contrasting worlds as if they were so framed by the author. As to the rest of Shakespeare, and the plays of his contemporaries, theatre-managers have compromised in every imaginable way between financial expense, visual veracity, and narrative demands: their struggle to cover their tracks and not let on to what they were doing has been nothing like so great since audiences agreed to accept illusions and suggestions of sets rather than sets proper. This leaves the management with only two major financial problems: the number of actors that must be paid, and the number of costumes that must be provided for them. For the suggestive, semi-abstract sets of the new form are excused by an audience only if they serve to accentuate the visual richness of the costumed players. The bright portraits compensate, as it were, for the starkness of the frames, and we see our players not blended into a setting but in mounted groups and painted reliefs—a formal style of presentation that suits nicely with static choral ensembles, liturgy, and declamation. Was it so, one wonders, in Elizabethan times? We know the importance of the Elizabethan wardrobe and can understand how very necessary a brilliant wardrobe must have been in providing the illusion of theatre for plays whose sets were dark, crude, and negligible. And yet, when we glance down those long strings of characters in Elizabethan plays, we may well ask whether *all* were costumed, or whether the economics of the matter demanded that the principals alone be gorgeous and the rest only so-so, if at all. Of one thing, incidentally, we may be quite sure: the Greek or Roman play, demanding little but a wealth of economical togas, with a mere chaplet and splash of purple thrown in, was the supreme example of theatrical economy: *Julius Caesar*, for instance, is a happy example of Mr. Eliot's "place where three dreams meet"—in this case, the author's heroic dream, the audience's dream of blood and thunder, and the manager's dream of avarice. And if we then jump forward a few hundred years to *Look Back in Anger*, we see

the form that superseded the Elizabethan reduced similarly to its economical essentials: one cheap set for the three scenes; a mere five people to clothe in little more than breeches, shirts, two cheap dresses, and one business suit. And even this bare minimum is undercut by *Waiting for Godot*, and undercut again by *End Game*. Perhaps the return to the old form in *Luther* comes in the very nick of time, for Mr. Becket does nothing by halves and is bound before long to write a play that has no material content and requires neither actor nor theatre.

IT IS MOST INTERESTING to turn, now, to the effect which a revival of the old form will have upon the dramatist. There will still be wages and wardrobe to pay for, so he will not be encouraged by managers to go in for huge casts. But he will have no sets to worry about, no walls to lock him in: he may move as freely as in a novel from place to place—and may well reflect, as he does so, that if stage sets had never been introduced three hundred years ago, the novel might never have been invented.

And this, at least from the English point of view, is the most important aspect of the change Brecht has made in the theatrical form. There is now no reason why the young Englishman who would once have turned automatically to writing novels should not turn naturally to writing for the stage. The range, the line, the chapter sequence are all back in the theatre now: a nation of novelists may well become a nation of dramatists once more. And those who argue that the intensity of the boxed-in three-act must be lost in the strung-out sequence of the new method may see for themselves in *Luther* that the lost intensity is replaced by a sort of sequential excitement. The hero moves—as move he must—from one selected, pivotal moment to another: curiosity is hardly satisfied in one scene before it is being aroused for the next. It is needless to say that this method is at its happiest when biography and history coincide—as they do in *Luther*, as they did in Brecht's *Galileo*, as they do in *Julius Caesar* and *Henry V*. And it is also needless to say that the peril of this form—the peril of stringing along sloppily like old elastic—is no argument against it. Nobody has thought of condemning the three-act box simply because the majority of dramatists have collapsed under the strain of meeting its formal demands.

THE DANGER OF THE NEW FORM seems to be of another sort. In its Shakespearean prime, it was the *natural* way to write a play; to-day, in its revived form, it must struggle somewhat to *seem* natural—to recapture the ease and fluency that mark the native animal. Advanced tech-

niques of lighting, turning stages, and abstract setting *should* make this fluency come more easily; in fact, they will make it more difficult to achieve because they will further the lust for artificial chicanery that is already a serious nuisance in the theatre. For example, the new form requires what we may call chapter-headings—some sort of readable or audible announcement of each scene's time and place. A plain board saying "BROADSTAIRS: 1957" will be quite enough; but the Kent coat-of-arms and "*Broadstairs Welcomes Careful Drivers*," will only mark a beastly technical step backwards. A plainly-dressed nonentity, or a sort of running Prologue with a good voice, will also serve very well; but what must be dodged at all costs is some nasty conceit who will lower himself from the flies to hold long chats with the audience, or hit the villain on the behind with the notice-

board, or show films and photographs, make symbolic remarks, push symbolic furniture about, and generally so ogle and bluster that "alienation" will scream for ostracism.

We have already seen many examples of this debased cretin with his ham-hands and pudding-feet, and it is most important to note that his intrusive familiarity is never the free-and-easy thing it is supposed to be; rather, it is a mere trousered wind-machine, out to insist that the mechanics of a production matter as much as the visions and thoughts of the play itself. Many dramatists will, in any case, stick to the conventional three-acter simply because their talents enjoy its particular rigours; but many more will do so, letting the revived form die out like a passing fashion, if those who practise it ruin its simple charms with self-consciousness and ostentation.

Ruminant

The leather belly shades the buttercups;
Her horns are the colour of old piano keys.
Hopelessly the tail flicks at the humming heat;
Flies crawl to the pools of her eyes.
She slowly turns her head and watches me
As I approach; her gaze is a silent moo.
I stop and we swop stares. I smoke. She chews.

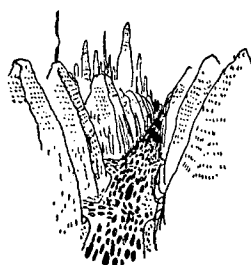
How do I view her then? As pastoral furniture,
Solid in the green and fluid summer?
A brooding factory of milk and sausages,
Or something to be chopped to bits and sold
In wounded paper parcels? No, as none of these.
My view is otherwise and infantile
But it survives my own sour sneers:
It is the anthropomorphic fallacy
Which puts brown speculation in those eyes.
But I am taken in; that gentleness endears,
As does the massive patience and submission
Huge among buttercups and flies.
But, in the end, it is those plushy eyes,
The slow and meditative jaws, that hold
Me to this most untenable of views:
Almost, it seems, she might be contemplating
Composing a long poem about Ted Hughes.

Vernon Scannell

NOTES & TOPICS

Letter from New York

God and Politics in America



OUR FIRST Catholic President has come into head-on collision with the Catholic Church. The event is not only an embarrassing one for the Administration (the Church does not embarrass); it is also highly provocative, for it has raised all

sorts of basic questions about the relation between civil society and organised religion. These are not the kinds of questions Americans have given much thought to over the past century-and-a-half; and the present church-state controversy must take some sort of prize for irrelevance, obfuscation, and shadow-dodging. I frankly doubt that any outsider could comprehend it. To tell you the truth, most of the time I do not comprehend it myself.

The issue of the moment is whether Federal aid to schools will comprehend parochial schools, or whether it is to be limited to public schools that are at present supported by the states and the municipalities. But that is stating the matter much too simply. It also extends to such things as: Should children in public schools be taught to sing Christmas carols? Should Bible readings, ceremonial or otherwise, be allowed? Should school assemblies be opened by prayers? All of these questions, and others even less imaginable, are currently being fought out in the courts and in the various public forums.

It must be noted that none of these questions is being directed towards *higher* education in America. It so happens that practically all the private universities in this country (Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, University of Chicago, etc.) were established by various religious denominations. And though in many cases the religious colouration has faded to the vanishing point over the years, it is rare that the original charters have been revised. Yet these institutions have been, and are, the recipients of many varieties of Federal aid, without any controversy being thereby engendered.

The elementary and high schools, on the other hand, have been community-supported projects for more than a hundred years (originally, they too were denominational; but the advent of universal compulsory education

changed all that.) Their function is to produce, not incipient scholars, but upright and enlightened citizens fit to govern in a democracy. In a country with such a diversity of religions and ethnic groups, it was obviously necessary to avoid anything that might give rise to divisiveness and contention, as questions of religion are notoriously prone to do. So these schools have been—well, either (1) secular or (2) non-denominational, depending on your point of view. And the difference is anything but academic. Is it the case that no religion is to be favoured as against any other? (And does this in turn mean, for instance, that a predominantly Christian school must not have a Christmas tree lest it offend the sensibilities of the Jewish children?) Or is it that religion itself is not to be favoured as against irreligion, as some seem to think?

Nor is that the end of it. For in recent decades, there has been a tremendous upsurge in the parochial school population (most noticeably Catholic schools, but by no means exclusively so). In part, the reason for this is the growth of the Catholic population, to a point where it now makes up about 25 per cent of the whole (some say 30 per cent). In part, too, it was caused by the difficulties that have plagued the public schools—by their overcrowding, their inability to maintain decent standards of instruction, to grapple with juvenile delinquency, etc. In any case, the upshot is that some 5½ million American school-children now attend parochial schools, these children could not possibly be accommodated in the already bulging public schools, and the parochial schools have become a fearful financial drain upon the resources of their respective religious communities, to the point where many of these schools are on the verge of bankruptcy.

TO CONTINUE: President Kennedy, fulfilling a pre-election commitment, introduced a bill to give sums of money to the states which these latter would spend on new construction of public schools or for raising school teachers' salaries, as they saw fit. The Republicans are, on the whole, against it, on the grounds that it is the first step towards "thought control" by the national government. (This sounds crazy, I know; but one must never underestimate the Jeffersonian distrust of government which has such deep roots in the American political imagination.) The Catholic Church's hierarchy, in most respects an ultra-conservative force in American politics, has in the past indicated that it shared the Republican point of view on this issue: education ought to be a family, not a state matter, they said. So it was a great shock to everyone when the American Catholic bishops, in conclave assembled, announced that (a) while

they would not say whether Federal aid was a good or a wicked thing, nevertheless (b) if there was any going, they wanted a cut. Moreover, the bishops announced that they would use all their considerable political influence to defeat any Federal aid bill unless it also gave money to the parochial schools—all the time, of course, without passing judgment on the intrinsic merits of Federal aid *per se*.

Americans are used to what the political scientists call “pressure-group politics;” but this manoeuvre by the hierarchy has rather stupefied everyone. True, the Negro organisations have in the past fought to kill Federal aid to education or housing that did not include anti-segregation clauses. Such blackmail is not unknown to American politicking. But at least the Negroes were on record in favour of such aid if properly conceived. For the Catholic Church to demand, as the price of non-opposition, the benefits of legislation that it has hitherto disapproved on principle—and may still disapprove on principle, for all anyone knows—is a highly original departure. Only minds thoroughly trained in theological niceties could have thought of it.

Anyway, once the Catholic bishops had spoken, the dithering was marvellous to see. The President bravely stuck to his guns, giving it as his opinion that the use of public funds to support parochial schools was unconstitutional, a violation of the First Amendment. But he did suggest separate legislation to permit Federal *loans*, at long term and low interest, to parochial schools—this in his opinion was quite constitutional. The bishops rejected this proposal: they weren’t sure that such separate legislation would pass, and besides, they had a thoroughly secular preference for grants as against repayable loans. The anti-Catholic zealots started a campaign to the effect that the separation of Church and State was in danger; the Catholics (and some Protestants and Orthodox Jews) cried discrimination; and it is altogether likely that no Federal-aid-to-education bill will be passed this session, for the good and sufficient reason that even strong Congressmen blench at the prospect of having to vote one way or the other.

I HAVE MENTIONED the First Amendment. The relevant clause reads: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The explicit intention was clearly to prohibit the setting up of an Established Church, a privileged creed. The implicit meanings, however, have stretched the best legal minds to the breaking

point, and sometimes beyond. The innumerable court decisions and government regulations add up to utter confusion. The Supreme Court seems to have declared (one cannot be more definite than that) that it is okay for the government to provide parochial school children with free transportation and free meals; but free textbooks are apparently taboo, don’t ask me why. All churches are tax-exempt, as a matter of public policy; and though there are secularists who insist that public policy ought to be neutral on the issue of religion *vs.* irreligion, they do not contest this tax exemption, since they too operate from tax-sheltered “educational” institutions.

In the end, all arguments come down to whether the First Amendment means that the United States Government should help all religions without discrimination, or hinder all religions without discrimination. It is as crude and blunt as that. In the nature of things, the State could not really be indifferent, even if it wanted to; both religion and the State are too closely entwined with all the other strands of human life; whatever the State does or does not do, it is going to be plumping for one or the other alternative. And I—as you may have gathered by now—personally do not believe for one moment that the United States Government is ever going to come out against God. American politicians are *for* God, by God. They know only too well that they’ll be damned here and now if they aren’t. The secularists can only win by converting this nation to atheism, which will not happen in their days or mine. But they are going down fighting, and their passion is something spectacular. They are popping into court at the slightest provocation; and the one group who will certainly profit from this Church-State controversy will be the lawyers. They usually do, don’t they?

Meanwhile, all sorts of schemes are being devised whereby the parochial schools might obtain government money without the money actually being given directly to the schools—or with the money being given directly to the schools but for some ostensible purpose other than financially supporting them. One of these schemes will prove acceptable to the Church and to the Administration; the Republicans will decide that Catholic votes are more important than the principle of state parsimony; and a bill will eventually pass. It will not, of course, dispose of this issue forever. But it will provide a welcome reprieve. After all, who knows? Perhaps forty years from now the survivors of the 20th century will all be practising Zen amidst the rubble.

Irving Kristol

P. M. S. Blackett and War

By Alastair Buchan

THERE is a great deal in Patrick Blackett's *Critique of Some Contemporary Defence Thinking* [ENCOUNTER, April] with which I agree. As someone who has to digest as much as he can of the flood of analytical treatises on strategy and arms control (American, Russian, and to a lesser extent British and European), I am appalled by the consistent victory of quantity over quality, and how turgid and unrealistic much of it is. I fully endorse his criticism of the tendency of many American writers to employ a double standard, expecting the Soviet Union to judge Western intentions in the light of our moral pretensions while we are to gauge Soviet intentions by reference to their diabolical capabilities. I agree that game theory seems to have little or nothing to offer in terms of practical judgments which can be used as the foundation of policy. Although the symmetries of the missile age do give an enhanced importance to quantitative analysis as a guide to likely courses of action and reaction (compared with the very rough-and-ready calculations which alone were possible when sea, land, or primitive air-power dominated the scene), the entry of the mathematician into what is fundamentally a political field has often led to absurd attempts to quantify imponderable factors or to give an impossible degree of precision to matters of pragmatic judgment. And there is indeed an unhealthy strain of social pessimism in the thought of some contemporary strategic writers (though their fascination with the awful potential of destruction is just as noticeable at the other end of the spectrum, in Bertrand Russell or Linus Pauling).

However, I disagree with Blackett on two major points.

The first is his belief that in strategic analysis the civilian with an intellectual training has only a marginal contribution to make to the "conventional military wisdom" of professional staffs. This may be true of operational research to which Blackett made such a great contribution, that is to say, bringing the technique of

scientific analysis to bear upon a special tactical problem in a war setting. But it has never been true of strategy where the great theoretical advances which have influenced policy have for the most part been made either by civilians or former officers working in a reflective environment in peacetime and employing rigorous techniques of logical analysis: *viz.*, Clausewitz, Mahan, Jomini, Douhet, Liddell Hart.

Blackett is particularly sceptical of the value of the civilian intellectual since, "any military analysis which leads to definite recommendations for decisions must be readily intelligible to the political and military leaders who have the responsibility for executive action." It is quite true that such analysis must be capable, if accepted as the basis of policy, of eventually being reduced to fairly simple operational precepts. But to use this as an argument for eschewing the more subtle and complex analytic techniques of which the intellectual mind is capable, is as absurd as it would have been to have told Mill or Keynes that their work was valueless because the austere intellectual process by which they first arrived at their conclusions was not immediately comprehensible to a back-bench M.P. or a junior Treasury official.

The American government has drawn the civilian intellectual more closely into the formulation of strategic policy than any other governments—and clearly more than Blackett approves. To my mind this is a sound practice if it is kept under proper control. Their work not only invigorates the thinking of the military bureaucracies—in just the same way that the work of academic economists keeps treasuries on their toes—but also provides some informed grist for serious public debate. Since public opinion would not in any case have left the formulation of strategy in the nuclear age—with the catastrophic consequence of a false judgment—to "traditional military judgment and wisdom," it is as well that there should be a corpus of informed lay analysis to set the agenda of such debate. If we merely had the anodyne statements of annual White Papers and the rambling *obiter dicta* of American generals giving evidence before congressional committees, we should be in a poor way indeed! If some of the American-published material is second-rate, this seems to argue for associating *better* civilian intellectual minds (in particular those with training in the

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humanities) with the problem, rather than telling a deeply concerned public that they must take their judgments on so dire an issue ready-made from "the gentleman in Whitehall" or the Pentagon, without an opportunity to examine the premises on which their conclusions rest.

MY SECOND POINT OF DISAGREEMENT concerns the particular thesis which Blackett has singled out for his principal attack: namely, Albert Wohlstetter's formulation of the problem of maintaining an effective system of deterrence on the part of the West once Russia had become an effective missile power, and his demolition of the view that mutual deterrence was automatically assured merely by the presence of bombs and bombers on each side. Blackett, though attempting to discredit theoretical analysis as a guide to strategic policy, admits its value by employing the same method himself (as do more extreme proponents of the theory of an inherently stable balance, *e.g.*, General Pierre Gallois). But in attempting to show that a surprise attack would never be worth the risk to an aggressor, he seems to me to have used a model which is much more abstract than Wohlstetter's whose comments were addressed to the world of real weapons and real countries.

Blackett propounds a world of two unnamed countries, each capable of inflicting a hundred million deaths on each other and of destroying ninety per cent of the other's retaliatory capacity by surprise attack. The lowest price that the aggressor could pay for his aggression on Blackett's model would be ten "mega-deaths" and if, for any reason, surprise was lost he would incur a crushing forestalling blow and suffer a hundred "mega-deaths." Even this he considers too favourable to the aggressor since he would not be certain of inflicting ninety per cent casualties on the enemy's retaliatory force by surprise owing to uncertainties about its whereabouts and the difficulties of concealing the preparations for his attack.

Now this sounds like the voice of sturdy common sense; but Blackett is only able to produce this sense of equanimity by simplifying his model, emphasising the factors that complicate an aggressor's problems and conveniently omitting those that may simplify it. Thus, by talking about hypothetical countries at an unnamed point in time, he is able to avoid any reference to the enormous disparity in intelligence information available to the Soviet Union and to the West, concerning the location of each other's long-range weapons and their state of preparation. This weakness is apparent when he lists the facts which a potential aggressor would have to know in this connection about his adversary, since in 1959 (before the problem of vulnera-

bility was taken seriously in the West) they were all available to the Soviet Union.

In the second place, he makes no mention of the probability that a first strike might destroy the communications in the country attacked; and much more serious, he omits any reference to the problem of penetration. If Russia had really built up a missile force in 1959/60 of a size which Khrushchev and the Soviet marshals were trying, with extreme unwisdom, to persuade us that they had, a 90 per cent successful strike on Western bases would have exposed her to a retaliation by a handful of missiles and about 180 aircraft of varying performance and ceiling with free falling bombs. These latter would have been coming in against targets in the Soviet Union that were protected by upwards of 10,000 fighters and at least one effective type of anti-aircraft missile deployed in considerable numbers. How many would have reached their target?

Third, Blackett makes what appear to be some excellent points concerning the difficulty of effecting genuine surprise. But here, again, the same vagueness regarding the period—past, present, or future—is evident. "Is there no chance of there being a few dissident individuals...who would notice the not inconsiderable preparations for such a massive operation as a first strike?" he asks. This depends entirely on the nature of the first strike force, for unlike bombers the preparation of missiles does not involve a lot of activity outside small and remote bases. Moreover, solid fuel missiles (which the Russians must soon have) can be made ready within ten minutes. "Would any country seriously contemplate initiating a first strike...without the slightest warning to its civil defence authorities?" It would not, but Russia, like most Western countries, can only provide fall-out protection to its citizens, and it certainly possesses the necessary control over communications to order them into their cellars during the one to four hours available before retribution struck. Consider the tourists: "Could the Soviet authorities be sure there were no foreign agents among them?" Tourists in Russia are politely confined to the beaten tracks, and Mr. Khrushchev has often spoken of the vast spaces available to Russia to deploy missile bases. The paucity of information available to Western governments about the location of Soviet bases (why otherwise such a desperately risky gamble as the U2?) gives one no confidence that their agents could detect alterations in their operational readiness. Thus Blackett's analysis really turns on the "technical problem of launching a few hundred ICBMs within a few minutes," which he rightly calls "severe," but which, given the steady improvements

in missile technology, it would be folly to regard as insuperable over the long run. One of the most curious features of Blackett's analysis is that he seems unaware of the profound differences between the bomber and the missile age.

FINALLY, BLACKETT ASSUMES only the unlikely case of a deliberate aggression, presumably by Russia and on the West. He takes no account of a situation in which one side or the other is convinced that it is about to be the victim of attack, or is about to suffer defeat in a limited war, or any one of the permutations and combinations of events inducing panic and false judgment (even in rational and prudent governments) that one can draw from the pages of history. Nor does he make any distinction between the delicacy of the balance as it exists to-day, and the problem of maintaining stability as technology enables both sides to master more dependable means of delivery of great speed, reducing the time available for considered political discussions from weeks to days to minutes.

My point is not that surprise attack is immanent in any given situation, but that technology is working steadily in its favour—or was, until the West began to take the problem of vulnerability seriously. And, though one can think of many factors which would militate against its likelihood, its consequences would be so devastating that even if there were only one chance in a thousand, it would be worth spending a large proportion of our resources on reducing even this fraction. To reach any judgment as to whether progress is being made towards diminishing this danger and creating a truly stable balance there are many variables to be considered—the relative size of retaliatory forces, their disposition, their nature, their communications, their dependability and others, all demanding precise analysis not instinctive judgment. This incidentally—and not the likelihood of surprise attack—was the burden of Wohlstetter's well-known article:

Deterrence in the 1960s is neither assured nor impossible [he wrote] but will be the product of sustained intelligent effort and hard choices, responsibly made.

PROFESSOR BLACKETT believes that Western strategic policy has taken a misguided and expensive course in response to an academic theory. This view may be warmly cheered in Britain where there is an inherent distaste for taking the views of intellectuals seriously (especially American intellectuals) where they concern national security. Liddell Hart was taken much more seriously by the Germans themselves in the inter-war years and

his theories were put into practice by *them*—to our cost—in 1940.

But I must point out some consequences that would have flowed from a failure to take seriously the problems of keeping deterrence up to date, and adopting Blackett's policy of trusting to luck. (A strange view, incidentally, for a member of Tizard's Air Policy Committee!)

In the first place: Western military staffs knowing the vulnerability of their bomber and static missile bases would, in their traditional military wisdom, have put great pressure on governments for an increase in the size of these forces. (This was in fact the tendency in the Pentagon at the time Wohlstetter was writing in 1958.) This would not only have accentuated the arms race, but would have made impossible the kind of sensible pruning of retaliatory capacity evidenced in President Kennedy's budget message of March 28th, and would have eliminated that hope of a stabilised system of mutual deterrence which may prove the first step towards disarmament.

Secondly, if the difficulties of maintaining a credible deterrent had not been exhaustively demonstrated, there could have been a powerful incentive to smaller countries (who want nuclear weapons for prestige or blackmail purposes) to embark on their own programmes. It is significant that the justification of the French A-bomb is made largely in terms of an inherently stable balance, discounting the vulnerability and surprise attack problems in terms very similar to Blackett's analysis.

In the third place: to have been content with a purely manned-bomber and static-missile deterrent in the West, while the Soviet Union was claiming strides in the production of an unknown number of missiles, would have meant that in every crisis the West would have had to react so energetically—sending SAC or Bomber Command aloft like a flock of pigeons at the first sign of tension—as to accentuate its seriousness and give the Russians genuine grounds for a pre-emptive attack.

FINALLY, such a policy would have had a disastrous effect on our diplomacy—making Western statesmen (with detailed knowledge of the real risks involved) more edgy, less ready to negotiate, and offering Russia opportunities for blackmail diplomacy which even a less dynamic man than Mr. Khrushchev might have found hard to resist. Far from speeding disarmament, as Blackett suggests, it would have created an even more unpropitious climate than to-day's.

THE NECESSITY continuously to overhaul the Western system of strategic deterrence is a confounded nuisance, coming as it does at

a time when there is an equally urgent priority in our defence planning which is connected with it: namely, the need to strengthen the conventional forces of the West. But it cannot be wished out of existence.

I suggest that Professor Blackett has not

destroyed the case for strategic analysis but strengthened it. Would he not devote his own great gifts to it, instead of occasionally spraying the workers in the vineyard with buckshot under the mistaken impression that he is scaring off the crows?

Cuba and the Intellectuals

By Anthony Hartley

ON SATURDAY, April 15th last, the world learned that Cuban bases had been attacked by aircraft variously reported as belonging to the Cuban air force itself or to the U.S.A. On Monday, April 17th, this was followed by reports of landings on the south coast of Cuba by forces at first estimated as considerable, but later discovered to consist of a relatively small body of political exiles acting under the orders of a Cuban revolutionary council, whose President was Mr. José Miró Cardona, the first Prime Minister of Cuba after Fidel Castro's arrival in power. Within three or four days of their arrival this inadequate expeditionary force had been defeated (it seems to have received no support in the shape of an attempted rising inside Cuba itself), and prisoners were recounting over Havana television the training they had received in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Florida at the hands of agents of the American Government, which for its part was coming in for a good deal of abuse from its enemies, acquaintances, and allies.

In Britain intellectuals were well to the fore with letters in the *Times* and *Guardian* protesting against American policy in Cuba, and reasons ranging from the sterling qualities of the Castro régime to the danger to world peace involved in a direct attack on it. Condemnation was unanimous, though the tone in which it was pronounced often differed widely. I do not think that there was one British paper which supported American action in Cuba, and I doubt if there was any politician of any party who did so.

I HAVE SET OUT THE bare skeleton of the Cuban crisis as well as that of the British reaction to it, because it is no use hiding the fact that, for someone who, like myself, believes profoundly in the Anglo-American alliance, believes it to be, at this point in history, a condition of our national existence as well as a condition of the survival of a great deal of what I personally value in Britain and Europe, this gratuitously

disastrous adventure was an unpleasant shock. And, since it is very important that those of us who do believe in that alliance should speak our minds (it is, indeed, essential if we are to continue to speak at all), I must say that I regard American action in Cuba as wrong and as contravening the principles on which a steady and successful foreign policy should be based. There are a number of reasons for this.

First, the operation was badly conceived on a purely technical level. This is my least important point, and accordingly I make it first. But, if countries rely on the opinion of exiles (however worthy these may be) for the basis of their policies towards other countries, mistakes will be made, and what seemed at a distance to be a military promenade intended to help an insurgent people only waiting to throw off its chains will end as a hopeless foray into the midst of a population which is at best indifferent. Cuba—let us face it—has cast doubt on the competence of American policy and its execution, and this is very damaging to the West. Political immorality will always find some friends, political incompetence, never.

Secondly, intervention in Cuba, from whatever motives, is in a tradition of American policy in Latin America which is a bad one, which has never succeeded except briefly and locally and which, in the case of Mexico, only failed to prove disastrous because there was no strong rival of the U.S.A. waiting to take advantage of its mistakes. In the case of Cuba such a rival existed with an instrument ready to its hand—the Communist Party. This being so, the U.S.A. had two choices: either immediately to try to overthrow the régime with all the force at its disposal or else to carry through a policy of friendship and swallow such affronts as the nationalisation of American business, the establishment of relations with China, and so forth. The Eisenhower administration refused to choose. Instead, they made a series of minor gestures against the Castro régime, which did not seriously affect its ability to survive, but which immensely increased its dependence on

the Communist bloc.¹ Of course, it may be that Castro would have drifted into such dependence anyway, but that is no excuse for a policy which made it inevitable for him to do so. Recent policy towards Cuba has been a regression from Roosevelt's "good neighbour" policy—a line of action, incidentally, which is just as specifically American as that of carrying a big stick, but which is far, far less frequently mentioned by critics of U.S. behaviour in Latin America.

Thirdly, the Cuban expedition was a breach of international law. This point requires some development. No doubt there are cases in which assistance to exiled revolutionaries from, or even active intervention by, a country's neighbour is justifiable. If, before the death of General Trujillo, the Organisation of American States had come to the conclusion that the régime of which he was the founder had prolonged its nefarious existence beyond the limits of human patience, I fancy that few tears would have been shed even in those circles most devoted to the exact observance of international law.² But, for an action of this kind, one of two conditions must be fulfilled: either there must be internal disorder or external unanimity. Either the dislike of the citizens of a country for their régime must have developed into something approaching civil war or else there must be an almost unanimous opinion abroad of the undesirable character of a régime. Even this, however, has

its dangers. During the 19th century such an opinion of a régime's undesirable character frequently caused interventions by the powers in the affairs of other countries, and these, while well meant, are now usually equated with imperialism by those who were on the receiving end.³

IN CUBA neither of these conditions were fulfilled. The operation, in fact, was not so much one of intervention as of subversion and, as such, was clearly in defiance of international law.⁴ Moreover, it was in defiance of a rule of international law which the West has every interest to uphold. It is the Communist bloc with its efficient agents, its governmental secrecy, and its experience in mounting putsches which stands to lose by an elimination of the instrument of subversion from the diplomatic armoury. The Soviet Union has greater means than we have and a greater choice of targets. Countries where the Western powers might conceivably find advantage in an induced change of government can practically be reduced to Cuba, Guinea, and Albania—the immediate Soviet satellites are too firmly in the grip of the Red Army to be detached without the risk of war—and of these Guinea would almost certainly turn out to be a boomerang. Compare this with the immense scope open to Communist parties for the undermining of rickety democracies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and it becomes clear that if the West selects this terrain on which to fight, it will be somewhat in the position of the duellist who chooses rapiers while knowing that his opponent is not only a first-class swordsman, but is also covered with protective armour. This, of course, is not to say that the West should abandon totally its weapons in this field, but it is to suggest that it would be unwise to brandish them. No doubt the Soviet Union will continue to subvert governments it does not like as it has always done, but just for that reason it is in the Western interest that there should continue to be strong international disapproval of such tactics. To allow the reproach of *tu quoque* here is to give the other side an enormous advantage.

Fourthly, there is the risk of war. There is no doubt that this would be greatly increased were America and Russia to take a "no holds barred" attitude to the cold war. A situation in which governments were being subverted right and left in the interests of one or other of the two world blocs would be one in which explosive crises would arise more and more frequently until, at last, the great opponents found themselves in positions from which they could not retreat for reasons of prestige. This may happen anyway, but, whatever conduct the Russian

¹Mr. Theodore Draper's articles on Cuba (ENCOUNTER, Nos. 90 and 94) seem to me not to take into sufficient consideration the effects on the Castro régime of such incidents as the dropping of pamphlets on Havana by aircraft from Florida. Given the suspicious and excitable character of revolutionaries, these irritations increased their incipient paranoia concerning the U.S.A. without seriously threatening their position.

²I notice that Mr. Paul Johnson has issued a clarion call for U.S. intervention in Haiti (*Evening Standard*, June 1st). As the song has it, "it ain't what you do, it's the place where you do it."

³Even in the Congo the highly altruistic U.N. intervention is now widely denounced as imperialism.

⁴Here I should again diverge from Mr. Draper, whose reasoning appears to me to run as follows: Cuban resistance movements must be helped; the only way to help Cuban resistance movements is by outside intervention (e.g., the supplying of arms); therefore there must be outside intervention. One can only argue like this by leaving out of account the existence of countries other than America, Russia, and Cuba, or by presuming a war situation to be already in existence to such an extent that every diplomatic consideration has to give way to the exigencies of the struggle. This latter alternative may be true, but, to say the least of it, it requires proving in the framework of international politics.

Government may think it proper to pursue, the U.S.A. should be concerned to damp down the fires, not stoke them. Here again it is in the true interest of America and the West, not merely to be more peaceful than the U.S.S.R. or China, but also to appear so to other countries and particularly to the Afro-Asian group. This is not to say that the West should not defend itself. It should reply vigorously to Russian intervention (President Kennedy's warning that the U.S.A. would do so in the Congo has certainly increased stability in that area), but its operations should be defensive and appear so clearly to other people. Whatever strategic threat Cuba may represent, the action taken against it was not clearly defensive.

On all these counts, then, American policy in Cuba stands condemned. It has broken down barriers which should have been maintained; it has produced no useful result; it has done great damage to the reputation of the U.S. and, hence, to the West. A great power detected in inefficient duplicity is a miserable spectacle.

ALL THIS is true, there is little that can be said in immediate mitigation of a blunder on so large a scale, whatever room for misunderstandings and cross-purposes the machinery of government in Washington may provide. What, in fact, seems to have happened was that the Eisenhower administration had prepared a plan for military intervention in Cuba, in which the exiles would have played the part of a mere vanguard backed by American troops. President Kennedy, when he came to power, would have none of this active American intervention, but unfortunately failed to cancel the whole operation. The Cuban exiles went in as the result of a compromise plan which, as is usual in such cases, produced the characteristic merits of neither alternative: invasion or no invasion. And this is understandable—such things often occur within governments—but no less inexcusable for that. It remains true that it was a bad idea for the Eisenhower administration to formulate such a plan and a crazy one for the Kennedy administration to put half of it into operation.

YET ONE DOES NOT REQUIRE to approve of the Cuban escapade to think that some of the reactions of our native moralists are excessive. And that in two ways. As the measure of American delinquency is exaggerated, so too are the merits of the Castro régime in Cuba. The one feeds the other. Was it not the Americans who were responsible for the gambling hells of Havana? Did not the Puritans of the revolution close them down? Was not the Batista régime supported by the U.S.A. (Batista also came to power with the support of the Cuban Com-

munist party, but this is forgotten)? And so on. . . . Inevitably the blacker the one side in a quarrel appears, the more snowy is the aspect of the other. And American action in Cuba has put a final touch of the tar-brush to Uncle Sam's appearance—especially in the eyes of those who were disposed to find him pretty sooty anyway.

Yet politics is not quite as simple as that. Because one side is wrong it does not follow that the other is right. The character of the present régime in Cuba is a matter of dispute. I am quite prepared to accept that it has done much good to the average Cuban and also that it is not a cast-iron Communist bureaucracy of the East European or Chinese type. Still, there are some straws in the wind. Such indications of direction as Major Ernesto Guevara's adherence to last year's Moscow declaration of Communist parties or the seizure of copies of *Dr. Zhivago* from a Havana bookshop have more significance than denials of party membership by revolutionary leaders, who have every interest in denying it (both these instances, incidentally, are unknown outside countries of orthodox Communist persuasion). No doubt, Cuban Communism is more like that described by André Malraux in *Les Conquérants* or *La Condition Humaine* than it is like that of a party bureaucrat in Moscow. Its representatives are more appealing human types, their methods as ruthless, perhaps, but less inhuman. However, in a political situation such as the Cuban one it is direction that counts. Whatever the causes of their predominance (and there is a certain resemblance with the situation of the Spanish Left during the Civil War, where external pressure advantaged the Communists with their superior efficiency and control of Russian aid), the Communists do appear to be establishing themselves in Cuba by their usual methods. And this is also a régime which has just abolished elections, which has got rid of a large number of its political opponents (and of Dr. Castro's original companions-in-arms) by detention, exile and, occasionally, execution, and where it is extremely unlikely that anyone called a "counter-revolutionary" would receive a fair trial.

For Mr. Kenneth Tynan and his co-signatories of a letter in *The Times* (April 19th) Cuba has an "effective Government enjoying solid majority support." The abolition of elections might seem to show some doubts of that "solidity" in Cuban government circles, but, be that as it may, the same has been said in the past of some of the most unpleasant tyrannies of our time. One tends to be a little wary of this kind of statement when made of a régime with a high rate of political refugees and a considerable disregard for the rights of the in-

dividual citizen. Similarly, though we have not yet been informed that trains in Cuba now run on time (that perhaps has too many overtones attached to it), all that is advanced of Dr. Castro's laudable desire to raise the standard of living of his people, his wholehearted tackling of "the problems of poverty, ignorance, and backwardness," has always been said of dictatorships—usually with truth. Franz Borkenau, for example, once wrote: "For the first time in Spanish history a constructive effort was made to solve the 'social problem.'"⁵ Was he referring to the Second Spanish Republic? No, to the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Yet, who would maintain that *that* régime was admirable? More recently we have read (in a *Times* leader) of the spreading of social services and economic improvements in the Dominican Republic carried out under the auspices of the late General Trujillo.⁶ I have some sympathy with those signatories of the *Times* letter who insisted on the addition of the words "though not always in ways that all of us would approve" to the eulogy of Dr. Castro's economic activity. I am sufficient of a sentimentalist to believe that the moral character of a régime can be tested in a rough and ready fashion by the number of executions it orders, the number of exiles it drives out, and the number of political prisoners it detains. And I would like to know which of those intellectuals who signed the *Times* letter share my disapproval of some of the "ways" in which the present Cuban régime is tackling its problems.

For phrases like "not making an omelette without breaking eggs," "historical circumstances," "bourgeois elements," "opposition of a corrupt minority" are all very well from the latitude of Mayfair, Kensington, or St. John's Wood. They are phrases which sound equally good in Paris, London, or New York—almost anywhere, in fact, but in the court-room, and even then the prisoner will probably find himself in a minority of one when he does not quite like them. Well, I don't like them either, and I will not accept the sophistries they imply.

⁵ *The Spanish Cockpit*, pp. 40–41.

⁶ "The impartial traveller in the Caribbean cannot but be impressed with his [Trujillo's] achievement. There was a thriving and stable industrial economy, which the Dominican Republic owes to Trujillo's ability to inspire confidence with the foreign investor. The social services, in the form of hygiene and education, were spread throughout the rural and urban districts of the country. . . . There is no evidence that the peasants felt discontented and, indeed, if they knew anything of the conditions of their fellows in the neighbouring islands or on the Central American mainland, they had no cause." *The Times*, June 2nd, 1961.

Plenty of countries in the world are dealing with just as difficult economic problems as those of Cuba in a humanitarian, rather than a totalitarian, spirit. There is the way of India in Asia, that of Mexico, Uruguay, and Costa Rica in Latin America itself. And there is nothing to indicate that that way is less efficient. China has just suffered a vast economic disaster despite its million or so executions of "landlords and bourgeois elements."

I CANNOT, therefore, imitate the *schwärmerei* with which many British intellectuals regard the Cuban régime. And I think that those who would accompany this by an equally excessive condemnation of America should meditate a few facts. Cuba was not like Hungary nor like Suez. American troops were not used, and the operation failed because of it. Can we imagine a genuinely imperialist régime behaving like this? In Hungary Russian troops went in twice, were defeated once, and then assembled still more troops to crush a desperate resistance. At Suez Anglo-French forces went in once and were withdrawn at the request of the U.N. In Cuba U.S. forces did not go in at all. Mr. Philip Toynbee did well to talk of "varying degrees" of wickedness in Hungary, Suez, and Cuba (*Spectator*, May 12th), but I wish he had brought himself, as an expert on the subject of guilt, to make some estimate of what those "degrees" were.

The fact is that, though it is easy to believe that American action in Cuba was wrong, it is excessive and hysterical to go on about its "wickedness." Wickedness usually implies a purposeful brutality without the twinges of conscience and hesitancy which were very evidently afflicting President Kennedy and his administration. And this exaggeration, this readiness to think the worst of a country which is our ally now and has been our ally in two wars, is significant. There is in some English intellectuals an anti-American automatism which is likely to be triggered off by almost anything, and when, for once, there is real cause to blame the actions of the U.S., the chorus becomes deafening in its mixture of chauvinism and *schadenfreude*. I think that I am not alone in asking myself whether this gleeful emotionalism is in place, is, indeed, anything but thoroughly discreditable when speaking of a friend's mistakes. The change in our position in the world since the war seems to have engendered inferiority complexes, from Suez groupers to the anti-Americans on the left, and one result is a nagging drone of complaint which fills the intellectual atmosphere like a miasma.

This, I suppose, would not matter so much

but for the real dangers of the world we live in. Nothing, even among the utterances of Mr. Frank Cousins, is more unrealistic than the theory that there are "two mad groups" in the world, the idea that we can set America off against Russia leaving ourselves sitting pretty and priggishly in the middle. We live near the borders of a Russian empire which is still in a dynamically expansionist stage of its history and which is only kept from indulging its natural instincts by the dangers of the operation. Those dangers are created by American opposition to its projects. In Britain we are, therefore, sheltering to a considerable degree under American protection, which we have chosen (rather than

Russian domination) because the U.S.A. seemed to the majority of us a society which was in some sense "better" than that of the U.S.S.R., more humane, more free, and more informed by the values on which our own political and juridical systems are based. Anyone who dislikes this position can agitate for a switch in alliances on Britain's part. Such a course is honest, if not—to me at least—totally comprehensible. But a constant readiness to believe the worst of America and the Americans, while at the same time accepting their support, is both ungenerous and unwise. It is ungenerous by any code of human behaviour and unwise, since it might re-awaken in the U.S. that

"New Left"

"Fidel did promise elections. But he quickly found out that the Cuban people did not want them—for very good historical reasons. The Cubans have been having elections since 1902 or 1903.... Even if Fidel would hold elections the U.S. Government and 'self-controlled' press would claim that they were rigged.... The main reason the Cuban people don't want elections is that elections to them are a farce, they always have been. They feel right now that they have a more direct democracy...."

"You must remember the desire, the terrible desire, for unanimity on all decisions. They don't want things to be just a majority rule, they want it to be all the way.... They had a revolution precisely to get rid of an empty formal 'democracy.' Even such details as the beards that leaders wear are symbols against formalisation, against bourgeois democracy. The uniforms too—Fidel never takes off his uniform. You can go on and on and count the symbols of anti-bourgeois sentiment that you have there...."

"To the Cuban worker free speech meant very little. The revolution to them is absolute good, especially to the campesino—a man who previously lived a life without hope, without expectation, without dignity. The Revolution gave them dignity; it told them that they were men, and it proved it by giving them guns. Therefore this is absolute good. Anybody who opposes the revolution is absolute evil. It's quite as simple as that. After all, they say, how could anybody oppose something so good? Free speech? We speak freely now...."

"I felt freer in Cuba than I've ever felt in the United States. Freer to go where I want, to say what I want, to think what I want. That's perhaps because I support the revolution. It is very difficult actually to say what kind of suppressive legislation or suppressive machinery there is in Cuba. Many people ran to Miami not because they were forced but because they were afraid they were going to be forced to. They saw

Communists hiding under every garbage can. Whereas in reality most of these people probably could have lived quite happily in Cuba.... You see, Fidel hasn't had to use police just as he didn't have to impose censorship on the press—they did it themselves. The workers in the print shops and so on. And this is a very unique feature of the revolution...."

"If somebody asked, what are the differences between Fidel Castro or Raul Castro and the Cuban Communist Party—I'd have to reply that the Cuban Communists are members of the Communist Party, Fidel and Raul are not. Other than that it would be very difficult to define differences between them...."

"You could say that Fidel as a personality is one of the most tolerant people. He does not judge people. He trusts people until they defect.... But the non-Communists, artists and intellectuals, have buckled under somewhat. They feel that they have no alternative to what they feel is the Communist mind, the Communist ideology...."

"Fidel is the wise man, at the same time he's a romantic, he's also a humorist, he's a great political leader, he's a strong man. He's everything that any Cuban could hope to have in one man and put all together. Although there is no 'cult' of Fidel—like the cult of Stalin—he is the popular director of Cuba. And he's worried about it in a sense, because he is such a great man...."

"Cuba is the first purposeful society that we have had in the Western hemisphere for many years—it's the first society where human beings are treated as human beings, where men have a certain dignity, and where this is guaranteed to them. And one of the best guarantees to make a man a man is a gun in his hand."

From an article entitled "CUBA: THE PRESENT REALITY" (an interview by the editors with Saul Landau, fresh from Havana) in *New Left Review* (LONDON), MAY-JUNE 1961.

isolationism whose disappearance we welcomed in 1941.⁷

⁷ Since I wrote these words I find my opinion confirmed by reading an article by Mr. James Reston in the *New York Times* (International Edition, May 30th). Mr. Reston, after pointing out that isolationism is not dead, but "has merely been taken over by our old friends in London and Paris," goes on to say that the British "are now resenting our leadership and secretly enjoying our mistakes in Cuba, Laos, and elsewhere," while "living in their own parochial way behind the American Air Force and rockets." He ends: "These are hard things to say, but somebody has to say them publicly because they are being said by influential American officials and Congressmen in private, and in due course they are bound to influence American policy in ways Europe will not like." It is possible to agree with this diagnosis, while believing that the importance of such things as the anti-Polaris demonstrations is much exaggerated abroad.

I BELIEVE firmly that the Cuban adventure was wrong. But I also believe that that does not make the Cuban Government right and that, when faced with an action on the part of a friend, which must be considered as bad, he can be told of this calmly, rationally, and regretfully without any exaggeration or false emotionalism or unjustified assumption of moral superiority. Much of the British comment on the Cuban affair has not fulfilled these conditions. For myself, I should like to see us talk to Americans now, both publicly and privately, as American friends talked to me at the time of Suez—with a consciousness that a momentary aberration of policy cannot fundamentally affect our opinion of a people with whom we share a belief in freedom and a common interest in preventing the spread of tyranny, by whatever name it may choose to call itself.

The Balance & the Mission

The Changing World Role of the U.S.A. — By RICHARD LOWENTHAL



"THE RELATION OF forces has changed."

This phrase, a favourite one of Mr. Khrushchev's since the autumn of 1957, recurred in a revealing context when he reported on his Vienna confrontation with President Kennedy: he used it to brush aside the thought that

the Western powers

might use force to maintain their rights in Berlin. The concept of the changed relation of forces is indeed the master key to the all-round stiffening of Soviet policy that has brought the world to the present crisis point. It is a concept based on facts—facts from which different conclusions may, of course, be drawn, but which any serious Western policy must face. The United States has only begun to face them since the start of the new administration; and the present confusion of voices there reflects the difficulty of the effort.

There are two sets of such facts affecting the relation of forces—one primarily military, the other primarily political. The crucial military fact is, of course, the vulnerability of the United States to long-range thermo-nuclear attack. When the "balance of terror" first arose from the acquisition of hydrogen bombs by both sides, it was still an uneven balance. The limited range of all means of delivery then available

favoured the Americans, who disposed of a string of air-bases surrounding the Soviet bloc. Hence Soviet territory was as vulnerable to the new weapon as were America's forward allies; but American territory was not. Under the guidance of the late John Foster Dulles, American policy sought to consolidate this advantage by extending its ring of alliances all around the Soviet camp, and relied on threats of "massive retaliation" to protect the exposed allies against any kind of attack.

The launching of the *Sputniks* in 1957 sounded the death-knell for that policy; for the first visible proof of Russia's capacity to launch intercontinental missiles foreshadowed the impending end of American invulnerability. Only a sufficient number of such missiles of reasonable accuracy were in position, the "balance of terror" was bound to become truly even. The threat of U.S. nuclear retaliation would lose much of its credibility as a deterrent to local attack on peripheral allies, unless these were clearly vital to the security of the United States themselves. Nor could the development of equivalent long-range weapons by the Americans be expected to restore their former advantage. Rather, by making them less dependent on forward bases for their bombers or rockets, it might tend to reduce the military value of their exposed allies in their eyes.

This evening-out of the military balance interacted with the upsetting of the political balance

by an upsurge of revolutionary movements in the under-developed regions of the world. Even while American nuclear ascendancy was still clear, it proved impossible to use it politically for stopping the Communist-directed guerrillas in French Indo-China; and there never was, of course, any question of using it against non-Communist uprisings of a similar type. Yet as the image of American supremacy was dimmed, popular risings (most of them non-Communist in origin) began to overthrow or at least threaten a number of the oligarchic régimes which American policy had backed for military reasons. The successors were often, though not always, neutralist in outlook. The weakening of the system of alliances was thus accelerated, while for the Communists new chances arose to influence the evolution of the new régimes in both foreign and domestic policy.

The present world-wide Soviet offensive is based on the conscious exploitation of these two changes in the relation of forces. Mr. Khrushchev has not, indeed, adopted Mao Tse-tung's crude formula that "the East wind now prevails over the West wind," or the reckless conclusion that he could now afford to start direct and open local wars without fear of nuclear escalation. But he has agreed to give much bolder support to revolutionary wars than in the past. He is seeking to inflict a vital retreat on the West in Berlin by military-political blackmail, while employing tactics designed to avoid firing the first shot. And he has proclaimed the principle that he will not grant veto-free power of action to any international organ designed to keep the peace in any crisis, *i.e.*, the principle of a free hand in world affairs.

AT THE PRESENT TIME, the United States is thus facing the most fundamental decisions on foreign policy since 1947—the year when the Truman doctrine and the Marshall Plan were announced in response to Stalin's post-war offensive in Europe. But whereas Truman could deal with Stalin's challenge from a position of clear ultimate superiority, based on the nuclear monopoly of the West, Kennedy has to deal with Khrushchev's challenge within an unstable balance of world power, based on nuclear parity.

What is at stake in the present debate in America, inside and outside the administration, is nothing less than the need to re-define the world role of the United States in terms of a world in unstable balance, and to get the definition understood and accepted by the nation at large. Ultimately, the decision on every concrete issue depends on that—the extent to which America's world-wide commitments should be maintained; the relative importance of military

and diplomatic, economic and revolutionary means in different regions and conflicts; the burdens to be shouldered and the risks to be run.

Now the acceptance of *any* permanent world role for the United States by its people is still a fact of recent history. America grew to industrial greatness in a sheltered distrust of power politics. While the older powers had a tradition of dealing with international affairs before they had democratic institutions, America graduated as a power only in the democratic age. In two world wars, the reluctant Americans could only be persuaded to take sides decisively by the argument that they were fighting not for a national interest, but for Good against Evil, and by the hope that Evil would be crushed for all time. After the first war, they had withdrawn from the world scene when the hope was disappointed. During the second, their leader had sincerely believed that "lasting peace" could be built on an understanding with Stalin, and had intended to bring all American forces home within two years after its end. The 1947 decision for the long-term "containment of Communism" was thus the first serious acceptance of a permanent role as a world power. The approval of the Truman doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and Nato—rather than the war-time alliance and the approval of the United Nations Charter—marked the decisive turning away from the isolationist tradition.

Such a break with the past could not have been achieved by "ideological" dislike of Communism alone. It was made possible only because the fact of America's position as a world power had at last penetrated the national consciousness. It had taken two world wars in which American participation was decisive, the atomic bomb, and the sight of European post-war devastation and British post-war weakness, before the U.S. Government and people realised that the survival of a non-despotic world order depended on them in the first place. They discovered themselves to be the world's paramount power. The assumption of the burdens and risks of world-wide responsibility was psychologically made possible by a new pride of supremacy. The initiators of the new policy had seen clearly that "containment" must be based on a combination of economically constructive with militarily defensive measures; the success of the Marshall Plan bears impressive testimony to their insight. But as the defeat of the Berlin Blockade was followed by the freezing of military frontiers in Europe, the threat (during the "Korea" years) of direct military attack came increasingly to dominate the thinking of U.S. policy-makers.

Before Stalin died, he had infected his opponents with his obsession with military force. Moreover, where pride of power combines with

widespread inexperience of world affairs, the illusion of omnipotence is never far away. And that illusion can be exploited by the opponents of the governing party both to decry further economic efforts as unnecessary, and to ascribe every international defeat to the fault of the government, if not to treachery in high places. It was so used by the Republican party in claiming that the Democratic administration had "lost China" to the Communists, and in promising to achieve a "roll-back" of Soviet control in Eastern Europe by the sheer weight of the pressure of Western armaments.

In fact, the Republican victory of 1952 and the subsequent installation of John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State ensured that the American preoccupation with the *military* danger of Communism would survive the death of Stalin and the subsequent changes in Soviet political strategy. There was no attempt to use the post-Stalin crisis for converting the still existing American military advantage into a political advance. Not even the risings in East Germany in 1953 and in Hungary in 1956 produced an American offer to exchange some forward military positions for the creation of a non-Communist, neutral belt. The United States stayed rigidly on the defensive, only seeking to prolong their military superiority by digging in all over the non-Communist world: under the umbrella of "massive retaliation," bases bred further bases, pacts further pacts, without regard to the popular credentials and political stability of the governments that could be persuaded to sign them. The last years of the short-lived "American Century" were thus wasted on the inherently futile attempts to lengthen the "Maginot Line" against Stalin-style attacks which Khrushchev's political war of movement had already begun to outflank.

It took some time for the nature and consequences of the change in the relation of forces to become manifest. The Soviet long-range rockets had to be produced and installed. The Americans, temporarily backward in rocket technique, actually needed additional Allied bases for medium-range rockets while catching up. (Many mistook this temporary backwardness for the main problem, instead of the new permanent vulnerability.) The Soviets, while testing American resistance by creating new crises at points of their own choosing, were still careful to avoid a serious clash and to alternate the crises with proposals for "summit conferences" couched in the language of "co-existence." Only that language now changed its function. In the first years after Stalin's death, it had been a means to consolidate shaky Soviet positions and to loosen the ring of hostile alliance by a relaxa-

tion of international tension. Now it became the accompanying music to offensive demands, intended to lull the Western, and specifically the American, will to resistance at the very moment when the Soviets were testing that will. Thus the first six-month ultimatum on Berlin was followed by an attempt to gain substantial concessions in return for a withdrawal of the threat; then by a shift of pressure to peripheral areas; and now by a renewal of the threat in even more precise form. Evidently, the Soviets consider that the "period of transition" is now over, and that the new U.S. administration must face the full consequences of the new, unstable balance.

In principle, the Kennedy administration was conscious of the problem from the start; and American public opinion has been made increasingly aware of it by defeat in Cuba and retreat in Laos. Even before the Vienna confrontation, the discussion on the changing world role of the United States was, in fact, in full swing. It centres on the question whether the U.S.A. should try to maintain all its world-wide commitments in the new situation—and if so, by what means. Three main positions have crystallised in this debate, and each implies a different view about the nature and mission of U.S. power.

FIRST OF ALL, there is a school unfolding the flag of "No Retreat." It wishes to maintain all commitments and to put American troops in to fight for them whenever necessary. This school, which includes most Republican spokesmen and columnists (but has also at least wistful sympathisers in the Democratic ranks), refuses to recognise any change in the relation of forces. In fact, it comes close to appealing to what D. W. Brogan called "the illusion of omnipotence." It blames the President not for permitting the Cuban adventure, but for refusing to provide American air-cover. It would put American troops into Laos alongside Thai soldiers to fight the Communists and their "neutralist" allies (as aid and training for the Royal Laotian forces has proved insufficient); and if this leads to more open and massive intervention by North Vietnamese units, it would bomb North Vietnam. In short, it pretends to believe that wherever Communism threatens to be victorious, it can and must be beaten back by American military force.

In this concept, the American mission in the world has become simply identical with the world-wide extension of American military power. All positive democratic content, as distinct from a purely negative anti-Communism, has vanished; no consideration of the kind of régime to be backed or of the will of the people concerned seems to arise. But at the same time, all realistic estimate of actual American power

has vanished too, for it is obvious that the United States does not have the ground forces required to intervene *successfully* in every conflict (e.g., on the periphery of Communist China). The hidden assumption appears to be that the mere appearance of *any* United States troops *anywhere* would be sufficient to deter the other side, because of the implied threat of nuclear war. In a world situation where the U.S. is in principle as vulnerable as Russia and more so than China, this is not convincing.

DIRECTLY OPPOSITE is the school which, starting from the change in the relation of forces, advocates a drastic cutting of military commitments outside Western Europe and a general policy switch to the support of "neutralist" régimes in place of the present Asian allies of the United States. Mr. Walter Lippmann, who has put the case for this solution most forcefully and consistently, has on occasion gone so far as to describe those Asian allies *en bloc* as "satellite governments," and has drawn a parallel between their "inevitable" abandonment and the dissolution of the French and British colonial empires. This school has much support among "liberal intellectuals," but little among people with personal knowledge of the Asian countries concerned. It seems to believe that there can be no popular basis for active opposition to Communism in any under-developed country, but that "neutralist" alternatives to Communist rule must exist in all such countries, and that the Soviets and Chinese will be quite content to let them rule indefinitely. Accordingly, it is unhappy about the Administration's support of the anti-Communist régime in South Vietnam, and would like to negotiate with the Soviet bloc the neutralisation not only of Laos, but of Thailand and South Vietnam—and, of course, of Communist North Vietnam as well.

There are a number of factual errors in this analysis. There are certainly some Asian countries on which a Western alliance has been foisted by unpopular governments against the will of their peoples, and which would have a better chance of resisting Communist subversion under a nationalist government pledged to neutrality. But there also exist others whose people are anti-Communist from bitter experience and desire an American guarantee, and whose pro-American governments (like the much-maligned government of harassed South Vietnam) are trying to pursue progressive economic and social policies though with inadequate methods and above all with inadequate administrative cadres. Nor is it true that truly independent neutralist alternatives to Communism exist in all countries at all times,

though of course there are neutralist individuals everywhere. In countries divided by civil war the neutralists are ground between the upper and nether millstones, as were the well-meaning Chinese Democrats in the post-war years, and as has happened to the followers of Prince Souvanna Phouma in recent months.

But the main fault of the Lippmann approach is, I believe, not one of fact, but of method, and one that he shares with the "No Retreat" campaigners at the opposite pole. He fails to see that in the present world, American commitments can no longer be defined in terms of formal military pacts alone. As Laos has shown, a military commitment to a country whose own forces are unwilling to fight a Communist rebellion cannot in fact be implemented. But it is equally true that a commitment to a country whose people wish to defend its independence does not really end when the country becomes technically neutral—for the maintenance of its neutrality and independence in the face of Soviet or Chinese pressure depends on its ability to call, in the last resort, for Western and particularly American aid. Hence a replacement of Western alliances by neutrality, where it is practicable, need not in fact reduce the extent of American commitments; rather, by promoting internal stability, it may in some cases facilitate their implementation. On the other hand, if the U.S. were really to wash their hands of countries that show a will to maintain their independence, the balance of world power would not remain unstable for long: it would be tipped decisively in favour of the Communist bloc.

THE THIRD POSITION is that taken after prolonged debate by the President, both in his message to Congress before he went to Vienna and in his report to the nation afterwards. It recognises the change in the relation of forces, and rejects "massive retaliation" as a deterrent to all kinds of attack anywhere. But it maintains the American world-wide commitment to back popular resistance to Communism in any part of the globe. It accepts the lessons of Cuba and Laos that where such resistance is lacking, it cannot be replaced by military intervention from outside; and it leaves to those nations that wish to maintain their independence the free choice of whether they regard neutrality or an alliance with the U.S. as the best way to do so. At the same time, it offers every kind of support for such nations—from advice and funds for solving their social problems by progressive policies to military aid (and even direct military backing) against Communist diplomatic blackmail or guerrilla warfare fomented from outside. Its general maxim is to help all those who are willing to help and defend themselves.

In the extent of American intervention envisaged, this policy is somewhere between the extremes of the "No Retreat" and the "Cut the Commitments" schools. But it is conceived on a different plane from both: it considers the prevention of crises by constructive economic and political methods as well as the military means of meeting them once they are there, and it uses criteria not of traditional power politics alone, but of democratic principle as well. From a traditional point of view, it is open to the objection that it does not offer a precisely foreseeable limit to the purely military commitments of the United States. Yet the answer is that the possible military commitments of a world power in a world in revolutionary flux cannot be defined in advance by treaty obligations. The Kennedy policy is thus more "ideological" than either of the alternatives set out before; but just because of that, it is more realist in that it corresponds better to the nature of the contest. It asserts defiantly that though the relation of forces has changed, the nature of the alternatives before mankind has not; and it bursts the confines of a decade of preoccupation with military defence by seeking to mobilise the dynamism of the ideas of progress in freedom. As in 1947, the American world role is defined in terms not of expanding military domination nor of limited military security, but of an alternative to the closed Communist system.

THE POSITIONS I have described were taken before Khrushchev put the issue of Germany and Berlin back at the top of the international agenda. The policies argued concerned under-developed countries with a potential of social revolution; the issues in dispute were the future of Latin America after the Cuban fiasco, and of South-East Asia after the Laotian collapse. But it is clearly at Berlin that Khrushchev is making his main effort to overthrow the unstable balance of power and establish a new position of Soviet superiority; and already the response of American opinion is taking shape along similar lines.

The "No Retreat" school wants no negotiation on Berlin and Germany. It proposes to let the Soviets go ahead in signing a "Peace Treaty" with their East German satellite—to warn them that the West will refuse to recognise its legality and consider its Berlin rights as unaffected—and to use force if Ulbricht interferes with Berlin's communications, such as the allied civilian airlines. The weakness of that approach is that it leaves to the Soviets the initiative for negotiation, and to the West the initiative for shooting. It is apt to create a state of world opinion (and even of opinion in allied countries) in which the threatened use of force proves politically impos-

sible at the critical moment. By his war of nerves, Mr. Khrushchev wants to persuade the world that the West has only the choice of surrendering to his demands or starting an unpopular war; a policy that seems to accept that alternative is hardly the height of wisdom. The "Cut the Commitments" school wants to get out of the commitment on Berlin. Like the "No Retreat" school, it sees the problem largely in military terms—but it does not want to fight. It therefore proposes negotiation aimed at granting Khrushchev's twin demands, recognition of the East German state and its participation in drawing up a new special statute for Berlin; in return, one should get new international guarantees for the independence and internal freedom of the island city. The weakness of that approach is twofold. (1) The mere conditional offer of recognition of the East German state has the same political effect as recognition itself: it makes clear that the West is resigned to its permanence, and thus deprives it of any weapon for further bargaining. (2) The East German state will then be in a position to press its maximum demands for the new Berlin statute: it will not only refuse any arrangement for the whole of Berlin (such as Senator Mansfield proposed), but will insist on cutting West Berlin's constitutional links with the Federal Republic (on which its common currency, legislation, and taxation, hence its economic viability depend) and on stopping the refugees by a control of the airlines, as Ulbricht has already announced. The result, once again, will be a demoralising collapse of the Western position or last-minute showdown—but a showdown in which we have deprived ourselves in advance of the basis for attacking the legitimacy of the E. German state.

THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION has not yet fully defined its policy as I write this, though it has indicated some things which it will *not* do. But it is possible to conceive a response to Khrushchev's memorandum that would be in line with its general concepts. This would be, first, to make its own proposals for a German peace treaty so as to convince the world that it is not the Soviets alone who are willing to negotiate. Second, to refuse to surrender Allied rights in Berlin and the rights of the Berliners so long as Germany remains divided. Third, in case of a showdown to reply to pressure with counter-pressure, of which there exist many non-military means, and only to force with force.

The Khrushchev demand for "a German Peace treaty" has two aspects: (1) the desire for international agreement on Germany's permanent frontiers and for certain permanent limitations on German armaments (particularly atomic armaments), and (2) the pressure for

Western recognition of the permanence of German partition. The first part corresponds to the genuine anxieties of the East European peoples and meets with much sympathy in neutral and allied opinion; it is negotiable in principle. The second, contrary to inter-Allied agreements and to democratic principle, would leave Berlin as only an "abnormal" situation, just as Khrushchev claims. It would be logical for the West to take the initiative in proposing negotiation on the contents of a German Peace Treaty (including permanent frontiers), while reserving the position that it could only be formally signed with a reunited Germany. Even so, agreement on the contents would free the Poles from many of their fears, and the West from the odium of backing German "revanchism."

In the course of such negotiations, the Soviets would have a chance either to accept the principle of German unity—as they did in the summer of 1955—or to propose really acceptable guarantees for the rights of the Allies in Berlin and the freedom of the Berliners. But if they stuck to their present plans for a separate treaty with East Germany, and to their unacceptable demands on Berlin, the West would have both shown its will to assure peace, and have kept a free hand to meet any East German pressure on Berlin with appropriate counteraction. The East German state is economically almost as vulnerable as Berlin. It still depends on substantial West German trade to keep its industry going, and it is just now in the throes of a post-collectivisation crisis in agriculture. Politically it is even more so. An open conflict with the Western powers would hardly contribute to the consolidation of a régime which has lost millions of citizens by flight to the West, and is still losing them at the rate of 200,000 a year. Of course, we cannot *exclude* the possibility that in despair, this abject régime may use force and start a war. But there is no need to frighten ourselves by accepting Mr. Khrushchev's alternative—that the West will have to submit to his demands or shoot first. We have means enough to avoid both.

SUCH A POLICY—of seizing the initiative in negotiation for legitimate objectives, of refusing to compromise on principle, of using primarily economic and political weapons in a showdown but being ultimately prepared to meet force with force—would correspond to the new Administration's re-definition of the world role of the United States as I have interpreted it above. In one sense, that re-definition is as much a response to the world-wide, ideologically-inspired offensive of Khrushchev as the earlier purely military preoccupations of American policy were a response to the military obsessions

of Stalin. Should we, then, deplore, as a British commentator has recently done, that the world is being dragged to the brink of disaster by the contest of two equally narrow ideologies? Or should we reject this comment as a sad indication of how far "moral neutralism"—the attitude that accepts the Western alliance as a necessity of British survival, but refuses to see any difference of universal human concern between the two sides—has already gone among British intellectuals?

The writer in question was disturbed by Mr. Kennedy's confidence in the eventual victory of freedom, which he equated with Mr. Khrushchev's confidence in the victory of Communism. But while Communism is Khrushchev's term for the Soviet system of Community party rule, Kennedy is not using freedom as a synonym for the American system of enterprise, or even democracy. Rather he is referring to the right of nations in all stages of development to choose their own systems—capitalist or socialist, fully democratic or (as in many developing countries) provisionally dictatorial—in independence. Freedom in that sense is not a "narrow ideology"; rather it denotes the alternative to the doctrinaire finality of the totalitarian system—the keeping open of the road for the creative development of human societies.

Of course, Kennedy's dedication to freedom in that sense would not be possible unless he was convinced that it coincided with the interests of American power in the world. But the true parallel that comes to mind here is not with the relation of power and ideology in contemporary Communism, but with the historical role of Britain in her struggle against continental despots. In fighting Philip of Spain and Louis XIV, in uniting with the crowned heads of Europe to defeat Napoleon but turning against the Holy Alliance soon after his defeat, and, finally, in standing up to Hitler, Britain certainly served her national interest to prevent the growth of a despotic super-power at her doorstep. But she also preserved the liberties of Europe—and the opportunities for varied, creative, and truly European development.

To-day, a Britain weakened both by the exhausting struggle with Hitler and by the impact of decolonisation is no longer a match for the despotic giant of our time—not even as leader of a coalition. But it was British rather than American leadership which first perceived the new menace on the morrow of World War II. When the United States took over the traditional British role in 1947, it was acting from a similar combination of national interest and a broad belief in freedom. It is the consciousness of that role that American policy is seeking to revive.

BOOKS & WRITERS

The Novel as Novel

By John Wain

MR. BAYLEY'S title* may seem, at first glance, rather irritatingly obscure; actually it is very precise, because it brings together his two main preoccupations, "characters" and "love," as economically as could be, short of calling the book *Love Characters*. His thesis is very much a fighting one; this is an important book, very aggressive behind its deceptively bland manner.

I will try to state Mr. Bayley's argument as simply as possible. To love is to take delight in the existence of the loved person, to be glad that he or she is thus and not otherwise. It is this that makes love different from sex, with which it runs parallel and often gets tangled.

Love has fewer preoccupations than sex, for the latter is a highly conservative instinct operating in terms of stock responses. We desire in obedience to the fixed patterns of our sexual imagination, but we fall in love because we are really seeing another person.

Love, in short, is what makes us interested in another individual; physical desire, by contrast, is self-regarding—we wait for the appearance of those traits which we know in advance will arouse desire, and then proceed along preordained lines. Lust is predictable, love is not.

Since love so inescapably brings home to us the differentness of other people (Mr. Bayley goes on) it is also the side of our experience which most forcibly lays before us the plurality, the compartmented nature, of life. It is the stubborn rock on which we kick our toes whenever we march off in pursuit of some ideal state of unity and homogeneity. That other people should be different from ourselves, and that we should love and value them for that difference, is the circumstance that will always pull us up when we begin to theorise largely about His-

torical Inevitability or Phallic Consciousness or any other great leveller.

Still following Mr. Bayley: the modern novel is very much inclined to ignore the kind of subject and situation that were covered by the traditional "love story," and the reasons for this are connected with a decline in the old regard for "character," the otherness of other people. Fifty years ago, critics assumed that if they could say of an author that his characters had independent vitality, that one could think of them as concretely as if they were actual living figures, they were praising that author in meaningful terms. Modern criticism has rejected this attitude, root and branch. Since Marx and Freud, no one has had the assurance to talk about "character" in the old sense; the one insisted that people are moulded by their circumstances, and particularly by their economic circumstances, and the other held up a picture of man's psyche as the battlefield of warring impulse and undertow. In either case, it could be said that there was nothing left of the concept of a stable and more or less self-generating "character," by the time they had finished with it.

"The literary personality," Mr. Bayley writes, "has gone down in the world." Writers are interested in producing fables—in revealing the world from their own individual viewpoint—and the people they write about, the figures who enact these fables for them, have been reduced to the status of mere walking illustrations to a text. Mr. Bayley quotes Lawrence:

I don't care so much about what the woman *feels*—in the ordinary usage of the word. That presumes an ego to feel with. I only care about what the woman *is*. . . . You mustn't look in my novel for the old stable ego of character. There is another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable.

By casting off the traditional notion of "character," by giving his allegiance to a conception of the ego, the identity, in whose presence "the

* *The Characters of Love*. By JOHN BAYLEY. Constable, 21s.

individual is unrecognisable," Lawrence lent the huge weight of his influence to an attitude that was gaining ground everywhere, and which has since achieved a complete ascendancy. According to this view, the old observation of character, the mastery of which was the accepted mark of the novelist, became no more than a parlour-trick. Concern with individuality, the things that set one person apart from another, became an admission of triviality. And the object of Mr. Bayley's book is to question this assumption. He is against the kind of novel that takes the reader into the closed world of the writer's consciousness and no other. For instance: "In the kind of novel which we agree to call poetic it is so clearly the author whose vision is at work, presenting the characters with a glow no doubt, but also with a definitive accuracy; the poetry surrounds them but has not got into them." How well those last words hit off a certain kind of "poetic" fiction! And "definitive accuracy" defines very well what Mr. Bayley is against, what he dislikes in the modern novel. He would like to go back to the kind of novelist who wrote about human beings for their own sake, allowing them their individuality and in the last resort their impenetrability; whereas what the typical modern novelist does is to project a world in which he understands exactly what is happening, not because he is all-wise but because the world he makes is a selection, from which he has excluded everything that doesn't fit in with his preoccupations. Mr. Bayley wants to see the criticism of fiction take another turn, away from the "novel-as-dramatic-poem" convention that has now been dominant for fifteen years, and to begin by re-admitting the notion of "characters," imaginative creations who are loved by their authors not for what the authors can do with them, not for what they exemplify, but simply for being themselves, as one loves people in actual life.

THIS RESULT, however, will hardly be achieved without a struggle. Modern literature is very committed to the building of private telescopes; each author invites us to look through the one he has designed, and we do so in the knowledge that what we see will be nothing like what any of the others are offering. Sartre's telescope is different from Hemingway's, Camus's from Mann's, Brecht's from Ionesco's, Auden's from Greene's. We accept this fragmentation because our whole world is splintered. If modern literature consists of a series of entirely individual statements, with no binding conventions at all, that does not seem odd in an age like ours.

Almost the only thing these solitaries have in common is that they are concerned with the creation of a "world" and not with the observa-

tion of character. "Character" is ignored because it is, as Dr. Leavis would say, "out there," not available for assimilation into the author's homogeneous little world. Character does not mill down. But the figures we meet in so many modern novels are milled down, all too obviously, in the interests of the author's system.

Mr. Bayley knows that this attitude has spread into other kinds of literature besides the novel, though he sees the novel as being the most harmed by it, and accordingly among his "worked examples" he includes Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Othello* as well as *The Golden Bowl*. The chapter on *Othello* may strike the non-academic reader as being too cluttered with controversy, since Mr. Bayley devotes about as much space to defying other critics as he does to giving his own views; in fact, however, such debate is very central to his book, because he is trying to shake free from a very strong thirty-year-old convention in Shakespearean criticism. When "modern" literature got going, and modern criticism got going with it, the new wave of Shakespearean critics issued a proclamation sternly banning any of the old talk about "character," which they saw as a hang-over from the age of Scott, Jane Austen, and Dickens, the age when the novel—and the novel of character at that—set the tone for all literary discussion. They set to work to interpret Shakespeare's plays as if they were the parables of Jesus, seeing them as rather streamlined wholes in which imagery, rhythms, metaphors, all worked in an integrated fashion. The old gossip about "character" seemed out of place here, insufficiently scientific and also insufficiently moral—for, though the older didacticism was avoided, Shakespeare's plays came to be seen as machines designed for a purpose and the new criticism found itself able to talk about that purpose in terms largely borrowed from the language of morality.

There can be no question of ignoring the solid achievements of this kind of criticism. It rescued Shakespearean commentary from a rag-bag of triviality and over-subtle point-missing. The danger was that in achieving so much, in imposing itself so firmly as an orthodoxy, the doctrine spread to other areas where it was not so useful and could, in time, become a nuisance. Here I think the process can be conveniently studied, by anyone interested, in the series of essays called "The Novel as Dramatic Poem" that ran in *Scrutiny* not long after the war. This was an exciting series, and to read it in one's early twenties was inevitably to be put under a considerable debt. But sooner or later the limitations of the method—a method which applied the tools originally forged for Shakespearean criticism to a much bulkier and

more miscellaneous set of objects—were bound to become irritating. Mr. Bayley has found them so, and among the other things he does in this book is to subject that whole critical procedure to a long, sceptical look.

THROUGHOUT HIS BOOK, one of Mr. Bayley's main purposes is to think fruitfully about literary forms and their relation to the experiences they are there to convey. This comes out very well in his essay on *The Golden Bowl*. Beginning from the contrast between dramatic poetry and the novel, he sees James's essential task as the devising of a form,

a method of combining the most formal and artificial type of *Comédie* plot with the breadth and "incalculability" inherent in the novel form. If this was the case no wonder James was excited, for such a combination would indeed be fantastic in its difficulty and majestic in its possibilities.

This kind of thinking cuts across the old transference of method indicated by such a title as "The Novel as Dramatic Poem." Mr. Bayley follows James in his attempt to break through to a new and original form—but not to a thesis, a stage-managed symbolism, not even to "The World of Henry James." What we

find held up to our gaze in the finally achieved novel is "not only the extraordinary complications of human motive and appearance, but their fundamental unknowability, a mystery in which reside both the principle of art and the principle of love."

AS THAT last, firmly-phrased judgment shows, there is a pleasantly confident tone about Mr. Bayley's book. If he is not exactly confident that people will believe him, he is at any rate confident in the rightness of his point of view. For all its low-toned modesty, *The Characters of Love* is a trumpet-blast. Mr. Bayley, believing that the doctrines of Symbolism have led the novel into a desert, wants to halt the whole expedition while maps are re-examined and a different route decided on. Critics are never so happy as when they are doing this, and quite rightly, for there is not much point in a criticism that does not go beyond itself, affecting our judgment of other and wider matters than the immediate object under discussion. Furthermore, it is in this area that the critic collaborates most fruitfully with the artist; criticism comes into existence as an attempt to explain and justify what the artists are doing, and it can never effect a revolution of taste and judgment by its own unaided efforts. Our view of the classics of the past is conditioned by our sensibility, and our sensibility is shaped by the contemporary artist; hence criticism alone cannot nag us into appreciating some neglected giant of the past; all we can do is wait until some artist arises whose work *now* will create in us a frame of mind that will dwell more lovingly on the same kind of achievement *then*. This point of view, which was put forward most strongly and memorably in the early essays of T. S. Eliot, has passed into modern critical orthodoxy and indeed cannot, I think, be seriously challenged. If Mr. Bayley as a critic is to persuade us that the symbolist way of reading novels is out of date and a nuisance, he cannot—as he himself knows perfectly well—do so unless there are novels being written now that will compel us to read them in a different way, to have a different view of the function and scope of the novel.

Mr. Bayley is, in these matters, far from being the usual isolated academic critic; he is an accomplished novelist himself, and the husband (if to note the fact doesn't seem too irrelevantly personal) of an equally accomplished, and more actively productive, novelist, Miss Iris Murdoch. In his book he nevertheless refrains, perhaps from motives of self-effacement and delicacy, from discussing the immediate situation in the English novel, which from one point of view is a pity, because one would like to know

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whether he sees any signs there of a new (post-Symbolist) approach. Instead he notes that there is "a great revulsion in the reading public against the whole idea of the writer's consciousness. Memoirs, biographies, accounts of war and travel in which other people have a real existence, are coming more and more to the fore," which may be confirmation of his argument or it may not. Personally I think that the swollen demand for non-fiction, for reportage and "actuality," is merely a symptom of the widespread modern distrust of the imagination and consequent contempt for art. In a news-reel age, gorged with documentary, the citizen becomes unable to respond to fable in any form: why waste time, he thinks, reading an account of things that did not *actually happen*? This bias is catered for by a huge army of hacks who put the memoirs of big-game hunters or film-stars into crisp, journalistic prose in return for a rake-off on royalties. No artist can compete with these virtuosi in the fight for the tired, fact-bethumped reader's attention.

THIS IS NO MORE than a minor footnote on Mr. Bayley's book, but it points towards something more serious. I think he might have assembled with more care and completeness such evidence as exists for a new stirring in the literary imagination. And if there turned out to be *no* confirmation of his view among good practising writers to-day, would that discovery shake him at all, I wonder? Can the truth have occurred to one person in all its clarity, when so many lively and enquiring minds have not even caught a glimpse of it?

I must insist on this point, because it is useless to nag at critics to stop symbol-hunting and myth-detecting in novels unless we can provide a body of original work which defies myth and symbol. I don't think we have one yet; Mr. Kingsley Amis is very strong against it, and constructs his novels out of a literalness that defeats any attempt to read portentous messages into them; still, his preoccupation with science-fiction seems to indicate an unfulfilled need. Mr. Bayley is very strong, just as strong as Mr. Amis, on taking novels literally, not attenuating them into symbol or parable, and is even cross with E. M. Forster for trying to do this with Conrad. Mr. Forster complained of a "mist," a centrally hazy area, in Conrad's work:

What else, one might wonder, did he expect to find? ... it is surely obvious that the greatness of Conrad reposes very simply upon the person and the fact? He has no myth with a view to insight: he has scenes and he has people. And these are only revelatory because they are what they are.

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Now I myself am very largely sympathetic to Mr. Bayley's attitude; I don't wish to attack it, but on the contrary to give it a chance to develop, to spread to other critics, and in general to see what it can usefully do. But I can see that a reviewer of the opposite tendency would have no difficulty in making mincemeat of this passage. It would not take a very subtle literary theorist to undermine the flat assertion that the greatness of a writer can "repose very simply upon the person and the fact," that his scenes and people are "reveatory because they are what they are." This seems dangerously close to the businessman's preference for *The Kon-Tiki Expedition* or *Leopard in My Lap* over any novel whatsoever. Conrad himself didn't think his "scenes and people" sufficient unto themselves; he directed his narratives into what we can only call broadly symbolic channels—a fact which Mr. Bayley puffs away by saying that Conrad is

a queerly portentous writer whose large intentions and resounding irony are the least satisfactory side of him. When he is great, it is because his characters and events are universally memorable: when he fails (as in *Victory*) it is because they are shadowy and pseudo-meaningful.

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This won't quite do; it might go down with me, but not with a critic who was probing for the weak spots; "universally memorable" isn't precise enough critical language, at such a crucial point in the argument, and if *Victory* is to be dismissed so curtly as a failure, what about *Nostromo*? Again, "He has no myth with a view to insight" seems an odd way of putting it; except among second-raters, a writer's "myth" comes to him as a *result* of his insights, not as a means of having them.

I could wish, in fact, that Mr. Bayley had made his book more armour-plated. And in particular it seems to me important that he should defend himself against the charge, certain to be made by an opponent, that he is *laudator temporis acti*, hankering for the return of simpler and happier times. The whole confrontation of "Nature" and "The Human Condition," in his closing pages, seems wide open to such an accusation. Traditionally, European writers referred their work to "Nature," a term Mr. Bayley takes two or three pages to discuss, but which he sums up adequately as an unbiased fidelity to observed experience:

The portrayal of "nature" suggests an almost involuntary fidelity to what is constant in human types and human affairs. . . . It implies a lack of pretension—the author gets no particular credit for his awareness of Nature though he may get credit for portraying it well. The *Human Condition*, on the other hand, implies a personal sense of where life is significant, of where humanity suffers especially or feels intensively; of unusual violence or unusual modes of feeling; of interesting development or of illuminating decay.

Mr. Bayley is for Nature, with its living appreciation of the norm, its sense of valuable differences within the usual, and against The Human Condition, which seems to him the child of a fevered age, always examining itself, so conscious of unending change that it is forever trying to define the precise outlines of each passing moment. This is all very fine, but writers cannot simply decide to treat of Nature if they are living in a society that sees itself as caught in The Human Condition.

Perhaps the way out is as Mr. Bayley sees it, through a reconsideration of our attitudes towards people we love. "As long as human beings accept one another with love their artists will try to embody that love in the representation of men and women and of the external world." In some ways, his is an oddly mixed argument, with one foot in literature and the other in life—but then, all the best arguments are like that.

AT ALL EVENTS, here, I am sure, is the area in which the criticism of fiction, in the next few years, will mainly concentrate itself. The whole idea of "character," neglected for decades, will turn out to be interesting and fruitful after all. Nearly every day one comes across signs that critics are beginning to turn, with that blind, plant-like instinct which the best of them share with the artist, towards this concern. One finds, for instance, John Davenport (*Observer*, April 30th) praising a new novel in these terms: "The great—one may indeed call it the triumphant—virtue of this book is that the characters exist in their own right. None of the stock types is to be found here. These people are actual human beings, not puppets twitched by a polemical puritan." Or Miss Mary McCarthy, in the March-April issue of *Partisan Review*, coming out with an essay on "Characters in Fiction" in which she declares, for all the world like Mr. Bayley:

The novel and the short story have lost interest in the social. Since the social has certainly not lost interest in itself (look at the popularity of such strange mirror-books as *The Lonely Crowd*, *The Organization Man*, *The Exurbanites*, *The Status Seekers*), what has happened must have occurred inside the novel and the short story—a technical or even technological crisis. An impasse has been reached within the art of fiction as a result of progress and experiment.

Like Mr. Bayley again, Miss McCarthy draws attention to a difference between English and American fiction; the English writer still reflects a more fixed and old-fashioned world in which character stands out. But this can't last.

Some interest in character is still shown by writers in England, perhaps because it is an island and hence more conscious of itself. [Mr. Bayley's explanation is better here; England is, if anything, *less* fiercely "conscious of itself" than present-day America.] But even in England the great national portrait gallery that constituted the English novel is short of new acquisitions. The sense of character began to fade with D. H. Lawrence. After *Sons and Lovers*, we do not remember figures in Lawrence's books, except for a few short malicious sketches... the last great creator of character in the English novel was Joyce.

It is so long since Joyce was praised, even by implication, for being "a great creator of character," that one's inner ears prick up: this is a new note. I think it is a note that will continue to be sounded, and that Mr. Bayley's book, quiet and unassertive as it is, will one day be looked back to as the starting-point, the first cat to jump in among some very plump critical pigeons.

Time Enslaved

Myths, Dreams and Mysteries. By MIRCEA ELIADE. *Harvill Press*. 18s.

FREUD ventured rashly and not very happily into the tempting and adjacent field of anthropology. Jung tried, in nearly all his work, to combine the disciplines of psychology and anthropology. Whatever we may think of his lush speculations he was fruitfully aware that the proper study of the modern Western mind must involve an understanding of primitive habits and ideas. Mircea Eliade, a distinguished French scholar, is described as "a historian of religions, an anthropologist, and a psychologist." It is hard to see how the modern student of any one of these disciplines could now afford to be ignorant of the other two. The anthropological field-worker and the psychotherapist can still, of course, continue to plough their own furrows without looking sideways at each other. But the theorist has recognised that all these subjects are species which belong to the same genus.

In *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* Eliade writes as an anthropologist whose other roles are supplementary. A quick eye cast down the index lights on Animism, Bull-roarers, Chuckchee, Fiji, Initiation, Mana, Melanesia, Sun-god, and a great many other old friends or enemies. More surprisingly, Frazer is referred to only six times, and always in notes; Malinowski makes no appearance, and nor do those admired American ladies, Miss Mead and Miss Benedict. But the territory is familiar; so familiar to some of us that it may be impossible to prevent a cowardly sinking of the heart. To all but the most enthusiastic devotees anthropology is a dismaying subject if only for the necessary fullness of the demonstrations, the wealth of the examples. "Here, for example, is the rite of initiation into the secret cult of Ngoye (Ndsasa) among the Kuta..." "Among the Mandja and the Banda, there is a society known by the name of Ngakola..." But although Eliade may give us two such consecutive paragraph-openings his book is saved from the dullness of surfeit by the all-important fact that he has a theory to expound.

It is his belief that a great many myths and primitive customs are directed towards an escape from historical time into *illud tempus*, that dimension of time which existed at the origin of all things and which is still attainable because it is in some sense eternal.

Paradise and the Fall, or the catastrophic overturnings of the previous régime, involving cannibalism, death, and sexuality, as the primitive

traditions see it; or a primordial rupture in the interior of Being, as Indian thought would explain it—these are so many images of a mythical event which, in happening, laid down the foundations of the human condition. Whatever the differences between these images and formulae, in the final reckoning they all mean the same thing: *that the essential human condition precedes the actual human condition*, that the decisive deed took place before us, and even before our parents: that decisive deed having been done by the mythic Ancestor (Adam, in the Judaeo-Christian context). Better still, man is obliged to return to the actions of this Ancestor, either to confront or else repeat them; in short, never to forget them, whatever way he may choose to perform this *regressus ad originem*.

Against this religious attitude have been the workings of Western historicism, a phenomenon which Eliade confines to the last hundred years. "Above all it is historicism which has tried to innovate, by postulating that man is no longer constituted by his origins alone, but also by his own history and by the entire history of mankind. It is historicism which definitely secularises Time, by refusing to admit the distinction between a fabulous Time of the *beginnings*, and the time that has succeeded it. No magic any longer illuminates the *illud tempus* of the 'beginnings': there was no primordial 'fall' or 'break,' but only an infinite series of events, *all* of which have made us what we are to-day."

Never can punctuation have been more subtly used to suggest a writer's personal attitude against the grain of an apparently unprejudiced statement of positions. Are we to think, then, that Eliade believes in the real existence of this mythical time—its existence, that is to say, outside human experience? The bull-roarers intervene, and for a great deal of the book the theory receives its illustrations without any more definite commitment than this. Indeed it might perhaps be suggested that the author is under no obligation to commit himself. Is this not, after all, a work of scholarship, quite in the manner of *The Golden Bough* or *Patterns of Culture*? For they too were out to justify a theory, even if Ruth Benedict's theory was only the contradiction of Frazer's horizontalism.

The answer is that *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* is *not* that sort of book. In fact it is an altogether awkward sort of book. For Eliade makes it reasonably plain from the start that he is not only presenting a theory about the nature of religious practice and belief but a theory, as well, about the nature of metaphysical truth. Touching for a moment on clairvoyance he quickly adds that "this problem belongs to parapsychology: hence it cannot usefully be discussed in the perspective of the history of religions, to which we have adhered from the beginning of

this study." In the same austere spirit he seems to be refusing to discuss the adequacy or otherwise of Freud's reductive method with the contents of mythology. Yet a few pages later we find Eliade openly attacking this reductive method on the familiar, though not necessarily ineffective grounds that "one might as well say about an elephant that once it was an embryo." And in the same spirit he is quite capable of writing, without the least qualification, that "upon attaining to the summit of the Cosmos, Buddha becomes contemporary with the commencement of the world." Is this a metaphor, or is it not? In the context of a book like this we are entitled to be constantly informed on this important question.

ALL THIS MAY LEAD to some dissatisfaction with the main body of Eliade's nonetheless fascinating work. The facts are presented, and the anthropological (or psychological) interpretation is repeated. But lurking behind this purely scholarly operation the author's metaphysical beliefs hover on the verge of expression. And it is not until the last chapter that they make their rather defiant emergence. It turns out that the most serious purpose of the book is, after all, to make a metaphysical statement. It is not a new one—why should it be?—but it is expressed with subtlety and conviction.

Eliade asks us to imagine that our Western society is being examined by some hypothetical Indian who, until this moment, has known nothing at all about us. What will impress him most about our modes of thought, our mental and spiritual condition? He answers that it is precisely our historicism which will first impress the observer as being wholly alien to his own mentality. He adds, by way of finally establishing his own position, that "in many religions . . . we have found a belief that, at the moment of death, man remembers all his past life down to its minutest details, and that he cannot die without having remembered and relived the whole of his personal history. . . . The historiographical consciousness of Europe—which some have regarded as its highest title to lasting fame—would in fact be the supreme moment which precedes and announces death." Passing over this dubious analogy and the implication of a false dichotomy we find that they were not really necessary to Eliade's argument. For he goes on to say that the second phenomenon which would impress our Indian scrutineer would, in fact, be the anguish which we experience in the face of death and nothingness. To some extent the Indian could understand this anguish, but to him, since history and the visible world are only "cosmic play," the exit from them is not an

entry into nothingness but into a real time and absolute reality.

In archaic and "primitive" culture, as well as in India, *this anxiety is not a state in which one can remain*; its indispensability is that of an initiatory experience, of a rite of passage. In no culture other than ours could one stop in the middle of this rite of passage and settle down in a situation apparently without issue. For the issue consists precisely in completing this rite of passage and resolving the crisis by coming out of it at a higher level, awakening to consciousness of a higher mode of being. It is inconceivable, for example, that one could interrupt an initiatory rite of passage: in that case the boy would no longer be a child, as he was before beginning his initiation, but neither would he be the adult that he ought to be at the end of his ordeals.

To me this passage is another illustration of the dangers of analogy; for surely Eliade is not maintaining that every boy who survives an initiation rite is in touch with a reality which is denied to uninitiated Western man? Yet an old point is being made in this chapter, and it is made with skill and sympathy. To this point Eliade has the existentialist philosopher replying: "You ask me to 'die to History,' but man is not and he cannot be anything else but History, for his very essence is temporality. You are asking me, then, to give up my authentic existence and to take refuge in an abstraction, in pure Being, in the *âtman*: I am to sacrifice my dignity as a creator of History in order to live an inauthentic, a-historic existence, empty of all human content. Well, I prefer to put up with my anxiety: at least it cannot deprive me of a certain heroic grandeur, that of becoming conscious of, and accepting, the human condition."

Eliade answers this by telling us that we would be mistaken if we assumed that Indian metaphysics devalue life. On the contrary, "the civilisation of India loves and reverences life, and enjoys it at every level" and "Maya is not an absurd and gratuitous cosmic illusion but a divine creation, a cosmic *play*, of which the end and aim is human experience, as well as deliverance from that experience." If that is the case we may find it hard to distinguish the ultimate faith of Hinduism from the ultimate faith of Christianity. And we may, though perhaps without the Camusian byronics, feel that our own position is now irrevocably committed to the facts of historical man as best we can discover them. And if this metaphysical experience of *Illud Tempus* is as circumambient as we are led to believe then no doubt we shall eventually run into it as we head away from it.

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Indian Apartheid

Caste and Kinship in Central India. By ADRIAN C. MAYER. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*. 35s.

WHEN INDIANS came under the influence of Western thought they began to see their own society through the egalitarian spectacles of a Biblical tradition given political force by the principles of the French Revolution. Thus they were shocked to find in their midst a large section of people who, being "untouchable," suffered discriminations unthinkable in the West. Social reformer after social reformer, from Ram Mohan Roy to Mahatma Gandhi, fought for the abolition of Untouchability; and once India became independent no time was lost in making the Untouchables full citizens. The practice of Untouchability was made a criminal offence; special measures were devised for "rehabilitation." They were given generous scholarships; their reservations in colleges, government service, and political representation were preserved. Every State of the Union has Untouchable Ministers and there has always been at least one Untouchable Minister in Delhi.

The Government of India has done all it could. However, there is always a gap between theory and practice. For Untouchability to go, the Untouchables themselves have to insist on their new rights. When they do, the law is always on their side.

But Untouchability is only part of the wider phenomenon of caste. As Mr. Mayer says, it "is only a more severe form of the concept of pollution which runs right through ritual regulations." Caste cuts the Untouchables off from the main body; they are, in the old word, outcasts. It also splits up the main body itself into a series of groups who never inter-marry and usually will not eat with each other; groups amongst whom status is decided by who will, and will not, take water from each other's hands. Partly this separateness comes from the element of kinship in caste; in some ways a caste is an extended family; everybody within is a brother, everybody outside is a stranger. Partly it is the result of the idea of pollution which governs the ritual side of caste; so many sorts of contacts with so many sorts of people outside the caste produce a pollution from which it can be both complicated and expensive to cleanse oneself.

The educated sometimes gloss over caste as a "British device to divide and rule." It is usually not mentioned except when Mr. Nehru attacks it, and the Government of India has banned

the word "caste" from census questionnaires. When I used the word in a broadcast it was changed to "group," and I was informed that "as far as the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is concerned, there is no caste in India, except Untouchability, which has been abolished."

The Minister should read Mr. Mayer, whose book shows on every page how central caste is to Indian life. Caste, says Mr. Mayer, is "pivotal in the actions of villagers and is so pervasive that it encompasses all major group activities of the peasant society"—including elections when what counts is caste quite as much as party.

CASTE HAS BEEN MUCH WRITTEN about—its origins, its theory, the marriage customs connected with it; and there have been elaborate descriptions of the caste of various regions. But no one before has done quite what Mr. Mayer has done, describe caste as it works in practice in one limited area. Yet such a description was urgently needed, for not only do castes differ regionally, but the way in which the institution itself works changes from region to region. Indeed, as Mr. Mayer points out, the relative position of two castes may alter from one village to the next. If caste is to be understood as a social phenomenon and dealt with as a political one, many more studies like Mr. Mayer's will be necessary; and they will need both his thoroughness, his documentation, and his capacity to resist the temptation to generalise from his material. Quite often one knows perfectly well that what he is saying has relevance far beyond his chosen village of Ramkheri, but Mr. Mayer makes no claims beyond Ramkheri's boundaries. He leaves it to others to find out whether other places operate similarly. His book sparks no fireworks and opens no Sesames; but it gives at last a firm foundation of local fact to what many observers have intuitively felt. Similar studies are urgently needed, especially by Indians themselves.

The first point to emerge from Mr. Mayer's work is that caste and sub-caste are based on a set of ritual rules so rigid that any deviation can only result in expulsion and the creation of another sub-caste. The only exception is when the new line of conduct has been laid down by the entire kinship group to raise its status by following the example of a higher sub-caste. There is no room for individuality in a system where the ego is abolished in favour of the group defined by family, ancestry, kinship, village, clan, sub-caste, and caste.

Of these groups, the most important, as Mr. Mayer says, is the sub-caste, not the caste. It is

the sub-caste, for instance, which is the group within which marriages normally have to be arranged. This is as true for Untouchables as for caste people. Indeed, it is at the two ends of the spectrum of caste that one finds the greatest rigidity. The position of the Brahman and the Untouchables are clearly defined. In between there is a good deal of vagueness, with castes improving their position as they get more prosperous or better educated. The Untouchables keep their own hierarchy quite undeviatingly; in Ramkheri, the Untouchable tanners live at the other end of the village from the Untouchable sweepers. I myself nearly started a riot in Bihar when I once tried to make a sweeper allow a basket weaver to draw water from his well. The other castes are more flexible: several of them have reduced their distance from the Rajputs in Ramkheri over the last generation, and in Maharashtra the Maharattas are beginning to accept as equals and companions a whole range of other groups.

IN RITUAL SOCIETIES, HOWEVER, the consciousness that things are changing is not strong; everyone has a place and knows exactly how far he can go without courting trouble. The system suits everybody for it gives everybody a group where he is accepted. And behind the hierarchical order lies the pressure of the arranging of marriages. Marriages are arranged within the caste and the sub-caste according to rigidly defined prohibitions of kinship and clanship; they are not the mating of individuals but of genealogies. And in Central India the prohibition on marriages within one's clan spreads the matrimonial net really wide, further stifling individuality. Mr. Mayer quotes the widower who went 40 miles to find a wife and clinched the deal only when his prospective father-in-law chanced upon a neighbour related to the pretender's wife's sister's husband—because then “he knew that this man's wife's ancestry was ‘equal’ to his and that she would not have been related to one whose line had any inequality” (by “inequality” he meant not only pedigree but also ritual behaviour).

When the village acts as a community, to worship, mourn, or celebrate, caste ritual becomes paramount. The whole pattern of relationship of castes and sub-castes is as intricate as the relationship between musicians, singers, and dancers in an operetta; everyone knows his part and everyone insists on being allowed to play his part down to the smallest *entrechat*. At such times, distances become of immense importance; whether it is the number of feet at which one stands, prays, sits, smokes, drinks, or eats from others. Feuds, indeed minor wars, have been

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METHUEN

started because distance between two sub-castes was not observed in a feeding line. The same people who do not mind with whom they sit in a bus or with whom they eat in a restaurant in town, will make quite sure that the respect due to the status of their group is shown them in their own village.

Everywhere ritual systems evolve blinkers in order to survive. The Indian social system relies mainly on two. The first blinker shuts off misbehaviour so long as custom is not openly flouted; the second dulls the mind to what the eye does not see. Jagjivan Ram, the Untouchable Minister in Delhi, told me of an Untouchable Collector who wanted to marry the daughter of a poor Brahman widow. The Brahman caste council gave permission; after all, the groom was well placed, the widow had no living relations, the girl would remain unmarried without dowry. But the groom insisted on a marriage with traditional pomp; this the Brahmans could not stand. The Collector was falsely charged with "rape" and had to be transferred. There was no wedding. There is also Kathleen Ghough's case of the Brahman who murdered his wife's lover for daring to

enter the house by the front door instead of sneaking in through the back.

WHAT THE EYE DOES NOT SEE does not count. In one's own village even peacock tails have eyes, and one is perpetually watched by the diligent tongues of older women who spend their declining years enforcing tradition. The towns, by contrast, are singularly free from old ladies and peacock eyes; their very size confers an anonymity which makes change possible so long as the form continues to be preserved back home. I have orthodox Hindu friends who do not mind inviting a foreign Untouchable like myself to stay in Delhi, but would not ask me inside their drawing-room in their ancestral home. They have to think of what the neighbours would say and of how that would affect the marital prospects of their children.

If caste and sub-caste are to lose their rigidity, more people must move to the towns. More girls must be educated, and more must marry for love. For as long as marriages are arranged, caste and sub-caste will retain their stranglehold on a society in which, as in Jane Austen's, marriage is the only career for young ladies.

Taya Zinkin

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Novels

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Laughter in the Dark. By VLADIMIR NABOKOV.
Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 15s.

The Tempter. By ANTHONY BLOOMFIELD.
Hogarth Press, 16s.

The Nephew. By JAMES PURDY. *Secker & Warburg, 15s.*

A Serious Woman. By STANLEY MIDDLETON.
Hutchinson, 16s.

The Governor. By ALAN THOMAS. *Gollancz, 18s.*

The Living Flame. By WALTER CLAPHAM.
Putnam, 16s.

IMPLICIT in most novels is a sense of the author's rejection of some—even of all—human nastiness or stupidity. Sometimes it is felt only because another quality, challenging it, is offered. At the most elementary level, the generosity and reasonableness of the governor of Khem, in Mr. Thomas's novel, show up the misguided characters of those around him; the serious-mindedness of Dorothea Seyton in Mr. Middleton's *A Serious Woman* calls that of her relatives and suitors into question. The symbolism pervading both Mr. Purdy's and Mr. Bloomfield's novels, which have profounder intentions, clearly shows their preoccupation with the unconscious motives underlying behaviour. Even Nabokov, who betrays no feelings, reveals his contempt for the disorderly crassness of life by enclosing it in the crystalline forms of art.

There is none of this in Mr. Cooper's novels. He is determinedly "non-spiritual" and might fairly be said to be against "high seriousness." This is both his limitation and his strength. When he comes to describe falling in love, as he does in his latest novel, he sinks to the level of the novelette: "This one's the right one for me." However, he does get a free hand with the action of his novels: feeling no theoretic duty to distort it, he gives devastatingly accurate descriptions of reality, with all the qualities (and the flatness) of an excellent photograph.

Joe Lunn (of *Scenes from Provincial Life*) is now thirty-nine; he is a successful novelist, but does not make enough money to leave his "Temporary" job in the Civil Service, which he has held for some six years. *Scenes from Married Life* tells of his successful attempts to achieve a happy marriage, get his new "pornographic" novel past the Home Office and retain his position in the Civil Service. It is significant that Joe is entirely a creature of circumstance: he

decides that he has "missed the boat" so far as marriage is concerned only because his novelist-friend and part-time colleague, Robert, "leaves him in the lurch" by becoming engaged. His actions never flow from within himself; no doubt this is partly because one of Mr. Cooper's comic intentions is to show how even the most intelligent of people are influenced by one another. But this depthlessness means that when he is left alone with his Elspeth, the "romantic" side of his love-affair and marriage is sentimentalised to the extreme point of the woman's magazine-story—although with the sex thrown in. Neither Elspeth nor Annette, Robert's wife, really come alive except as different varieties of "Pretty, sweet" bedmates. At one point Joe sees a "statue of a woman, headless and draped, which I should have liked to have owned"; he explores a fold of the drapery with his forefinger, "for the sensuous experience," to find it "black with dust." Perhaps Mr. Cooper has left an unintentional clue here as to what goes on in the hidden recesses of Joe's mind.

But is this failure of the ostensible central theme of *Scenes from Married Life* to come alive really such a weakness, after all? Mr. Cooper cunningly contrives, by some near-Gidean asides, to coax the reader into supposing that Joe Lunn may safely be identified with the novelist's intentions. But can he? Joe is highly intelligent, a sort of painstakingly de-sensitised sensitive; but his emotional experience of marriage is both shallow and pathetic. It is, in fact, so shallow and so pathetic, and those parts of the book that deal with the Civil Service are so rightly comic by contrast, that one feels that Mr. Cooper is more detached than he pretends; he is merely presenting the likeable Joe to the life, with all his limitations. You cannot ignore Mr. Cooper—he is too funny; and if he gives the impression of being deeper than he is, then surely his very cunning has some wisdom about it.

NABOKOV IS A KIND OF Satanic Mantovani, coming into cruel close-up on your screens at the end of the compelling torment to ask (the question mark ironic): "You have been distressed by my music, you worms?" *Laughter in the Dark* was written in Russian and published in Paris in 1933; this is the author's own English version, published in the U.S.A. in 1938. It is some measure of its purely technical brilliance that he can tell you his story in the first two sentences,

Once upon a time there lived in Berlin, Germany, a man called Albinus. He was rich, respectable, happy; one day he abandoned his wife for the sake of a youthful mistress; he loved; was not loved; and his life ended in disaster.

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and yet compel the reader's attention to the end. Nabokov is a genuinely "cruel" writer, and the cruelty of this book is appalling, repulsive, and powerful. The plot is melodramatic: Albinus is the dupe of dupes; Axel Rex, the villain, entirely heartless; Margot Peters, the cinema usherette, as worthless a baggage as ever graced the most Victorian of cautionary tales. Yet such is Nabokov's casual power that he causes the reader to suffer with the ridiculous Albinus as he loses his daughter, his sight, and his money, actually to wish to plead with Margot on his behalf, and to loathe the villainous Rex. The effect, rare in fiction, has its nearest equivalent in the dispassionate cinematic realism of films like *The Blue Angel*.

In many ways the book is an embryonic *Lolita*: Margot (who is at one point mistaken for a schoolgirl) is childlike and totally innocent in her waywardness, and it is this "helplessness" that draws Albinus to destroy himself, pointlessly, for her sake. The pointlessness is, in fact, the point; the skill of the author, his ability to move when he is unmoved, is the wryly ironic compensation.

THE TEMPTER is about a group of people who make pornographic pictures in a studio behind a bookshop kept by a mysterious figure called Samson (or Samuels). Mr. Bloomfield himself occasionally intrudes into the narrative to explain, with the aid of quotations from Mann's *Dr. Faustus*, that his story is really a moral fable about the necessity of degradation in the process of salvation. Society rejects pornographers, but is sick because they form an unacknowledged part of itself. In order that the "new man" should come (I found this rather recondite in terms of reality, but I presume Mr. Bloomfield is referring to a figure such as Jungian "integrated" man) it will be necessary for men to explore and understand the dark side of their own natures.

That Mr. Bloomfield's message is a true one I have no doubt at all; but here he has fallen between two stools: he does not, as a successful novelist should, bring it home to us in terms of the action of his narrative. Samson, who is a kind of saint-in-reverse, an anti-Christ conscious of the duty he has to perform, is not really a character at all, but a symbol. Insofar as he has a personality at all he is a cross between Gurdjieff and Alastair Crowley, with a suggestion of a once well-known London bookseller (prosecuted as a pornographer); but, as Mr. Forster would say, he only vibrates—he has no depth.

Except for being a censor, which is the other side of the coin, there are probably few things

more personally degrading than posing for pornographic pictures; and that is precisely Mr. Bloomfield's point. The trouble is that pornographers in real life are not, like his, capable of anything significant at all. Symbolic intention has here got the better of reality, and the reason is that there is a point in the "exploration of evil" beyond which it is foolish to go. The guilty enjoyment of pornographic pictures is an experience shared by many; to *make* them, it seems to me, is to give up just what Mr. Bloomfield suggests they may be gaining. I cannot speak from personal experience, but it has always seemed to me that continuous pornographic activities are not at all an exciting and Baudelairean exploration of evil; the only fiendish thing about them is their dullness. Nevertheless, this is a compelling novel, and people should read it to make up their own minds.

MR. PURDY'S *The Nephew* is also the prey of symbolic intent, though in a very different way. The story is simple. Alma Mason, a lifelong spinster, lives with her widowed brother, Boyd, in an American town called Rainbow Centre. For years their lives have revolved around their nephew, Cliff, whom they have brought up. Then he is sent to Korea and reported missing. Alma, a retired teacher, very conscious of her ignorance of "life," realises that she knows nothing about her nephew at all. She determines, vulnerable and afraid, to discover what she can about him; and as Mr. Purdy describes this he skilfully causes her to reveal to the reader (though not to herself) the mainsprings of her own personality.

This is not the sort of plot to give away, because its tensions form part of the process of its revelations. *The Nephew* is a sad, subtle, tender, and frighteningly competent novel. I have only one reservation about it, and this is that sometimes Mr. Purdy writes as though he were a robot, invented by Professor Trilling, for the purpose of demonstrating how the Jamesian novel has been transformed by Freud.

Thus, the action takes place in the shadow (or smell) of the ketchup factory, to which the characters have varying and presumably significant reactions, and to which Rainbow Centre owes its economic existence. (Get it? *Ketchup!*) When her brother forgets to pull the chain, Alma looks "down into the bowl," flushes it quickly, and washes her hands "like a surgeon," drying them on a face-towel that had once belonged to her mother. Despite the tenderness with which the relationship of the old people in the book is described, it is difficult not to



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James Mahon

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feel that Mr. Purdy's message is that they are living in fantasy (Rainbow Centre), not realising that they owe their existence to Freudian enlightenment (ketchup); and this, *pace* Professor Trilling, is no longer necessary. At its best *The Nephew* is reminiscent of James; it also reminds us that James' novels derive their power from his own calculated unawareness of their sexual undertones.

A Serious Woman is an accurate, astringent account of the emotional relationships and coming to maturity of the sharpish, clever schoolmistress-daughter of an opinionated and difficult schoolmaster in a Midlands town. At the beginning Dorothea Seyton's father dominates her; at the end she is boss—and the transition is subtly described and well-observed. The difference in quality between Dorothea and her two suitors (both schoolmasters) is skilfully conveyed; I was grateful to Mr. Middleton for the very real insight he gave me into this particular sort of provincial, not-often-enough articulated seriousness.

The Governor tells gently and clearly of the liberal and humane Sir Henry Bridgenorth's attempts to guide the fictitious state of Khem to independence, despite its extremists. The account of the political problems he has to face is admirable and salutary, and makes the book worthwhile. But the mechanical and unconvincing nature of Sir Henry's domestic problems—his son is beaten up and killed, and his wife falls in love with his private secretary and then commits suicide—make one wish that Mr. Thomas had concentrated exclusively on politics. As it is, he has been led to contrive a fairy-tale ending, in which the beloved governor is welcomed by a people about to be freed. Such public gratitude is not often met with in real life—by other than people who do not deserve it.

The Living Flame is interesting as an attempt to see into the personality of a tough, aggressive adolescent, who, although "straight," is calculating, apparently emotionless and scornful of his decent-chappish, puzzled father. We need novelists, as well as sociologists and psychiatrists, to tell us about boys like the Eddie of this book (what has happened to James Curtis?); and while Mr. Clapham does not pretend to be a writer of any great imaginative power, and never wholly succeeds in getting inside Eddie, he has written an often enlightening and never inaccurate novel about modern working-class life.

Martin Seymour-Smith

LETTERS

Snow and Crossman

MR. R. H. S. CROSSMAN, in his review of C. P. SNOW's *Science and Government* [ENCOUNTER, June], commends the author's assessment of "two top-secret controversies." The first, he writes,

produced, in 1934, the decision to give top priority to the development of radar.... The second, which took place in the spring of 1942, ended with a victory of those determined to give top priority to an expanded bomber offensive; as a result of this decision the war was prolonged for six months, possibly a year.

According to Mr. Crossman, the latter decision was won by Professor Lindemann against the judgment of Messrs. Tizard and Blackett. Professor Lindemann, again according to Mr. Crossman, championed area bombing because 50 per cent of the German working class would thus be "de-housed."

I do not have access to the relevant secret documentation, presumably available to (and now revealed by) Sir Charles and his reviewer. I therefore cannot assess the merits of the alleged controversy between Professor Lindemann on the one hand and Professors Tizard and Blackett on the other. I am not barred, however, by consideration of the official secrets to which I was privy in those days from taking issue with Mr. Crossman's surprising and original revelation that "the expanded bomber offensive prolonged the war for six months, possibly a year."

I have read some strange speculations concerning the mistakes that "prolonged" the war. This one is, by all odds, the oddest. Some military theorists have asserted that it was the abortive Arnhem offensive that "prolonged" the war; others hold that the German surprise attack in the Hurtgen Forest set us back by several months. Some critics blame the "Unconditional Surrender" statement by President Roosevelt which, they say, stiffened German resistance at the very moment when it seemed to be weakening. No less plausible is the allegation that Premier Stalin's refusal to co-ordinate Soviet military strategy with the strategic time-table of the Western Allies delayed grievously the overthrow of Nazi power. But what case can be made for placing the blame on the "expanded bomber offensive"?

Fragmentary though his evidence must be, Mr. Crossman may have some reason to assume that the "de-housed" German working class laboured all the harder in Hitler's arms factories, having no longer a home to lose. But the bombing offensive's objectives were not confined to "de-housing." Many strategically important industrial plants were knocked out or partially destroyed; communications were disrupted; and more important still, the destruction wrought on their homes weakened the morale of the fighting forces. Rightly or wrongly, the German High Command sided with Professor

Lindemann, and poured enormous resources, urgently needed elsewhere, into active and passive air defence. The West's crushing and decisive air supremacy on D-Day was not unconnected with the attrition suffered by the *Luftwaffe* in its attempts to interdict the Allies' "expanded bomber offensive." Mr. Crossman's assertion is not sustained by evidence that can in any way be regarded as conclusive. It is a bald and mischievous oversimplification. It denigrates the real achievements of Allied strategy, and, for good measure, cannot fail but to arouse bitter resentment in Germany, now our principal NATO ally.

In the same review Mr. Crossman challenges the wisdom of the United States' decision to develop the H-Bomb. He writes: "Against this gamble [the making of the H-Bomb] were ranged George Kennan of the State Department, as well as Oppenheimer and his band of nuclear scientists. *They all warned the President [Truman] against the crash programme and advised him instead to develop atomic tactical weapons in order to strengthen NATO's forces in the field.*" (My italics.)

There is not the slightest evidence available in the public realm—and most certainly not in the so-called *Transcript of the Oppenheimer Hearings* to which Mr. Crossman refers—to sustain this allegation. The debate about tactical atomic weapons for NATO, or for that matter for ground forces of any kind, erupted only several years *after* the decision to develop the H-Bomb was taken. If that decision had not been made, the Soviets would have chalked up one more "first," and the military-technological balance would have been tipped in the Communists' favour. The consequences of this would have been incalculable in terms of nuclear strategy and Communist blackmail potential. Moreover, the decision to make the H-Bomb did not, for obvious technical reasons, delay the development of low-yield atomic weapons.

Admittedly, Mr. Crossman is dealing here with complex issues involving much that is uncertain or simply unknown. We must not begrudge him the simple pleasures of indulging in hindsight. But we are entitled to expect that he exercises a *little* care.

ROBERT STRAUZ-HUPE

University of Pennsylvania

MR. STRAUZ-HUPE challenges me on two issues. First, he describes as mischievous my view that "the expanded bomber offensive prolonged the war for six months." Well, on this point, which concerns British Bomber Command, I am content to find myself in agreement with Sir Charles Snow and Professor Patrick Blackett, even if it means being rebuked from across the Atlantic.

He then proceeds to challenge my account of the American decision to make the H-bomb and adduces the *Transcript of the Oppenheimer Hearings* as evidence that "the debate about tactical atomic weapons for NATO, or for that matter for ground forces of any kind erupted only several years *after* the decision to develop the H-bomb was taken." I am content to quote only one of many

passages from the *Transcript* to refute this silly statement. Here are a few lines from Oppenheimer's own evidence:

Now, I have a few matters which came in between. During the doldrums of the H-bomb, the war in Korea broke out, and a large part of G.A.C.'s and other committees' attention was, as I say, devoted to the very immediate and the very obvious, and, I would say, to using an

atomic explosive not merely in a strategic campaign but also in a defensive or tactical campaign, and I think the record will bear out that that is what we were spending most of our time worrying about."

A little more care, Mr. Strausz-Hupé?

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

House of Commons,
London

Mr. Khrushchev's Revolution

What does Mr. Khrushchev really believe? We know that he says he believes in the eventual triumph of World Communism: but in what sense does he believe it? Is his belief merely a rhetorical abstraction, to be brought out on festive occasions only? Or is it a positive guide to policy, something to be practised as well as preached? Most Western commentators, perhaps because their own societies generally make a fairly clear divorce between practice and belief, tend to the first view. They see Mr. Khrushchev as a solid, sensible fellow, hot-tempered and given to sudden tantrums, but certainly not a revolutionary in the sense that Lenin and even Stalin were.

This view has been challenged in an article by Mr. Richard Lowenthal in the current issue of ENCOUNTER. Mr. Khrushchev's power, he points out, rests in the last resort on the party; and the party's power rests in the last resort on its ideology. "The ideological belief in world revolution," he writes, "is not just an edifying forecast of the millennium... it is an essential part of the legitimation for continuing the monopoly of the ruling party inside the Soviet Union." Hence, Mr. Khrushchev's brinkmanship in the Congo, in the United Nations, and in the Geneva talks on nuclear tests is not just the result of pressure by the Chinese or by diehards in the Kremlin: it is a considered policy, aimed at securing a considerable objective. Mr. Khrushchev, in Mr. Lowenthal's view, believes that the balance of power has swung to the Soviet Union, that the West will never dare to unleash a major war against him, and that therefore he can make piecemeal advances towards world revolution whenever the opportunity arises.

Mr. Lowenthal's argument has two great attractions. It makes Soviet policy during the last year seem coherent, and therefore comprehensible. Even more attractive, it removes all doubts about what the West's future course ought to be: if Mr. Khrushchev is really bent on winning world domination in the shortest possible time, it is obviously futile to seek agreement with him. If Mr. Lowenthal is right (though he himself does not seem to realise where his argument leads), Western statesmen can abandon the painful effort to reach a settlement of the Berlin problem, to negotiate a ban on nuclear tests, and to persuade the Russians to see reason in the United Nations.

But is Mr. Lowenthal right? The vital link in his argument is his claim that the "ideological belief in world revolution" is an "essential part of the legitimation" of the Soviet Communist Party's power. If this means anything (and it may not), it presumably means that if the Soviet Communist Party ceased to believe in world revolution its power would no longer be acceptable. This is most improbable. The mass of ordinary Russians do not want world revolution; and if the Communist Party gave up its messianic ideology, its power would presumably grow more acceptable to its subjects, not less. It may, of course, be true that belief in world revolution is psychologically essential to the party members, and that without it they would lose their self-confidence and their sense of purpose. But the Soviet Communist Party is a very different organisation from political parties in the West. In purge after purge during the long night of Stalin's rule its best men were killed and destroyed. Those who survived were the tough, the shrewd, the adaptable, the administrators, and the careerists. No doubt they like to repeat the old incantations at the appropriate times, and no doubt they like to tell themselves that they are the heirs of the Old Bolsheviks. But that does not mean that they believe the incantations any more than it means that Lenin would fit into the Central Committee of to-day.

Indeed, if Mr. Lowenthal is right then the present rulers of the Soviet Union must be a great deal more revolutionary than Stalin was. For there is no doubt that, under Stalin, world revolution took second place to the immediate interests of the Soviet State—as thousands of foreign Communists learned to their cost. The Nazi-Soviet pact was only the most flagrant chapter in a long story of betrayal. But if Stalin cared nothing for world revolution, why should his successors care more? What has happened in the Soviet Union to return its rulers to the Bolshevik faith which their immediate predecessor abused? Mr. Lowenthal's argument may be right. But so long as it rests on mere assertion, with no facts to support it, there is no reason to jettison the view that Mr. Khrushchev is much closer to Peter the Great than to Lenin.

THE GUARDIAN, 1 June

Cuba and the Cultural Congress

IN VIEW of the recent discussions in your columns—and one particularly conspiratorial view of current events which has woven the Congress for Cultural Freedom into the centre of an hallucination—I should like to state the following facts, in the belief that they may be of interest to your readers.

The record of the Congress in Cuba itself, both before and after the Castro revolution, is clear. Early in 1954, a group of eminent Cuban intel-

lectuals founded a Cuban Committee for Cultural Freedom. This Committee, like others in South America and elsewhere, was affiliated with the Congress. Among its founding members were: Jorge Manach, Levi Marrero, Anita Arroyo, and Luis A. Baralt, men and women known for their dedication to the restoration of intellectual freedom in Cuba. Throughout the ensuing years, the Committee was the object of consistent and increasing harassment by the Batista dictatorship. Finally, in January, 1958, owing to the almost total suppression of freedom of speech and assembly, the Cuban Committee was forced to disband. Even earlier, in May, 1957, the permanent secretary of the Committee, the writer and university teacher Dr. Mario Llerena, had been driven into exile, first to Mexico and then to New York. There, Dr. Llerena became the first propagandist and principal fund-raiser in the United States for Castro's 26th of July Movement.

On January 25th, 1959—i.e., three weeks after the collapse of Batista's government—the Executive Committee of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, meeting in Paris, issued the following statement: "The Congress declares its greatest satisfaction at the fall of the Batista régime and expresses its sincere hope that the Cuban people will establish the Rule of Law and begin the construction of a free democratic society." The signers of this statement include among others Ignazio Silone, Michael Polanyi, Stephen Spender, Manès Sperber, Raymond Aron, Luis-Alberto Sanchez, Jorge Manach, and myself. At the same time, the International Secretariat of the Congress sent a telegram to Fidel Castro and Manuel Urrutia, saluting their triumph as a victory for democratic freedom and human rights.

Three months later, Jorge Manach was elected President of the newly-reconstituted Cuban Committee for Cultural Freedom. On that occasion, the Committee made the following statement: "We, the undersigned writers, professors, and journalists, wish to express our great joy at the fall of tyranny and the return of liberty to our country... our sympathy and support go out to the revolutionary forces which, in this decisive hour, are fighting for final victory, so that freedom of expression, as well as all other rights and all dignity, shall be restored to the people of Cuba." Among the many names affixed to this statement was that of Dr. Raul Roa, first Vice-President of the Cuban Committee for Cultural Freedom and later to become Foreign Minister in the government of Fidel Castro.

To-day, however, the Cuban Committee has once again been forced to disband. With the gradual suppression of cultural freedoms, of university autonomy, of freedom of the press, and of individual rights, the majority of the members, despite their previous firm and enthusiastic support of the revolution, has been forced either into silence or into exile—some, like Mario Llerena, for the second time.

The Western hemisphere is therefore not, as has been alleged, "home territory," an area in which argument about the United States' economic and political hegemony, as well as about the policy to be adopted towards right-wing dictators is

RICHARD LOWENTHAL WRITES: *With its customary fairness, the Guardian concedes that my analysis "makes Soviet policy during the past year seem coherent, and therefore comprehensible." But if it fits the practice of Soviet policy—including its most recent developments—just as it fits Mr. Khrushchev's ideological pronouncements, how can the Guardian claim, at the end of the same editorial, that my argument "rests on mere assertion with no facts to support it"?*

The editorial correctly deduces that if I am right, "the present rulers of the Soviet Union must be a good deal more revolutionary than Stalin was," and asks why this should be so. The main answer is that Stalin during most of his reign found himself isolated in a comparatively stable, if divided, world of "capitalist" empires, always haunted by the nightmare of "encirclement"; Khrushchev has come to power in a world which the decay of old empires and the emergence of new nations has thrown into revolutionary flux, and feels that the vastly increased strength of the Soviet bloc can and must be used to turn that flux in a Communist direction. Moreover, Khrushchev bases his domestic rule far more on a revival of Leninist fervour in the party (and far less on non-ideological police terror) than Stalin did.

The Guardian writer betrays the reason for the widespread reluctance to accept the plain evidence of Khrushchev's actions and speeches in suggesting that once we do so, we must abandon all hope of negotiation with the Soviets as futile; indeed he is puzzled at my apparent inability to see "where my argument leads." But here he offers wishful thinking as an escape from a self-made bogey. For if I am right, Mr. Khrushchev wishes indeed to achieve world domination, but he also wishes to avoid world war. Our interests and his are irreconcilably opposed on the former point, but indissolubly linked on the latter. This makes an agreed settlement of crucial political issues—such as Berlin or the structure of the U.N.—highly improbable unless we are ready to surrender. But it makes an effort to limit the military risks of the conflict all the more urgent and by no means hopeless. As a contribution to the saving of peace, the tough confrontation of policies and risks at Vienna may yet prove more effective than the hazy euphoria of Camp David.

"taboo" for associates of our organisation and writers of our publications. The contrary is true.

Through its affiliated committees and its publications, the intellectuals of the hispanic world, often representing divergent political opinions, have relentlessly fought the right-wing dictatorships of Peron, Trujillo, Franco, and, as demonstrated above, Batista. The Spanish-language magazine *Cuadernos*, edited by Julian Gorkin and Ignacio Iglesias, has, since its inception in 1953, been primarily concerned with questions of social justice, agrarian and economic reform, and civil liberties in Spain and in Latin America—a concern which has won for it a large audience on that continent and an official ban in Spain. Among *Cuadernos* contributors are Haya de la Torre, Alfonso Reyes, Salvador de Madariaga, German Arciniegas, and Romulo Betancourt, men whose devotion to democratic ideals has implied neither "conformism" nor "chauvinism."

While the Congress could not condone the intervention of the United States nor of any other government in the internal affairs of another country, neither can it remain indifferent to the suppression of basic freedoms wherever and under whatever form it may occur, whether in Hungary, Spain, Tibet, or whether it be in the guise of Apartheid, McCarthyism, or Castrism. The Congress for Cultural Freedom abides by its charter, which it believes to be as valid to-day as it was when it was first adopted in 1950, and which holds "that there can be no stable world as long as mankind, with regard to freedom, remains divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots.' The defence of existing freedoms, the re-conquest of lost freedoms, and the creation of new freedoms are parts of the same struggle."

DENIS DE ROUGEMONT

Chairman, Executive Committee

*Congress for Cultural Freedom,
Paris*

Play Prizes

I THINK your readers will be interested in the results of the Sierra Leone Playwright Competition, which ENCOUNTER has helped to sponsor.

The panel of judges consisted of Davidson Nicol (chairman), Mrs. Rena Karefa-Smart, H. A. M. Clarke, Bankole Timothy, The Hon. Madam Ella Koblo Gulama, P.C., and Frank Wood. There were 13 entries, and the winners were:

1st prize: DR. SARIF-EASMON, a Sierra Leone physician, for a play entitled: *Dear Parent and Ogre*.

2nd prize: JOHN AKAR, a Director of Broadcasting, for a play entitled: *Cry, Tamba*.

3rd prize: AARON COLE, a barrister, for a play entitled: *The Chalk of Freedom*.

The prizes were announced in the *Daily Mail* of Sierra Leone on March 9th and the prize cheques have been awarded. The presentation of the prizes and the production of the play will take place shortly, in connection with the continuing celebrations of independence.

DAVIDSON NICOL

Sierra Leone

AUTHORS

Sidney Hook is Professor of Philosophy at New York University. Among his books are *From Hegel to Marx*; *Reason, Social Myths and Democracy*; *John Dewey: An Intellectual Portrait*; and *Heresy, Yes! Conspiracy, No!* His most recent book, which has just been published in the United States, is *The Quest for Being*, in which he writes: "In the best of societies death may be conquered, but not tragedy.... 'Being' is, in Dewey's phrase, a 'zero word.' The term merely enables those who write obscurely and feel inchoate to imagine that they are being profound. It is a sophisticated substitute for the concept of God which refuses to accept the responsibilities of traditional faith in a personal creator.... We need not repine that we are not gods or children of gods. The politics of despair, the philosophy of magical idealism, and the theology of consolation forget that although we are not gods, we still can act like men."...

T. R. Fyvel writes of himself: "Am married, have two daughters, live in London. Born on the Continent, educated at Swiss-German and English schools, and at Cambridge University. Would describe myself (with some differences) as of the Left-wing generation of the 'thirties, when I first took an interest in politics and so was drawn into journalism and broadcasting, a profession from which I never escaped again.... During the war, found myself engaged in psychological warfare in North Africa and then in Italy.... In 1946-50, was editor of *Tribune* (though I should emphasise that this was before "Bevanism" was born).... My book, *The Insecure Offenders*, will be published by Chatto & Windus this autumn. What started as a study of young offenders seemed inevitably to turn into a study of the society which produced them. The conviction grew on me that we are to-day involved in a major social revolution of which the current adolescent crime-wave is a small but illuminating symptom...."

Taya Zinkin was for many years correspondent in India for the *Manchester Guardian*. Her latest book was called *India Changes!* (Chatto & Windus).

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AUGUST NOVELS FROM SECKER AND WARBURG

CHRISTINE BROOKE-ROSE

The Middlemen

In the past few years there have been many satires on the world of publicity. It is perhaps a peculiar quality of the adman that he finds it so necessary to satirise himself. In her new novel, Christine Brooke-Rose has taken the conventional satire on admen and turned it inside out, using it for her own purposes to make a satire *within* a satire, not only of middlemen (for in the widest sense we are all middlemen today) but also of our conventional attitude to middlemanship.

Of this profound, yet highly amusing fantasy, MURIEL SPARK writes: "I believe that every book should have a beginning, a middle and an end. Christine Brooke-Rose has done a true English Satire about a society concerned with middles and neglectful of beginnings and ends in their waking lives. I am full of admiration. I don't want to go into the charm of the writing and its wit because these are self-apparent and act as a beautiful persuasive."

August 28th—15s.

ROGER PEYREFITTE

The Exile of Capri

Told in fictional form, the events and personalities of the decade which preceded the First World War become scintillatingly and scandalously alive as M. Peyrefitte, author of *The Keys of St. Peter*, describes the adventures of a rich French dandy who mingles with famous names in British, French and German social and literary life in Paris and Capri. As an ironic study in decadence it is extremely amusing and as a period piece, a brilliant *tour de force*.

August 8th—18s.